

EDMONTON'S 100% INDEPENDENT NEWS & ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

# VUEWEEKLY



## 2VUE TO A FRINGE

BOOKS: THE MESS THEY MADE / 27

FILM: AUSSIE FILM FEST / 31

MUSIC: OUR MERCURY / 37

HSS  
OBVIOUS, WE KNOW, BUT 'FRINGE-A-PUSSY'  
JUST DIDN'T LOOK RIGHT [VUE STAFF / 24]



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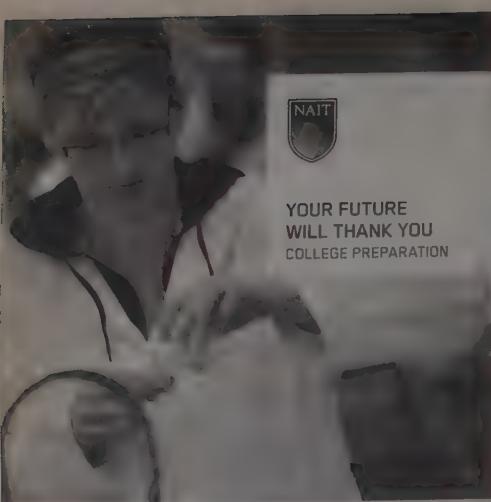
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NEWS



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## CREATION SCIENCE MUSEUM / 8

"We get some college kids from Calgary in who are curious. They've heard the news stories and they ask questions. So they're not entirely sympathetic... The university is really a closed shop as far as creationism goes." —Edgar Nernberg, Big Valley Creation Science Museum

## AUSSIE FILM FEST / 31

A national showcase can sometimes put some stereotype-promoting movies or cheery celluloid tourism brochures on display. Instead, these films are a startlingly raw and real look at the modern-day plight of the people who predate Australia, living there long before explorers and exiled criminals landed. —Brian Gibson, Vue film critic

## OUR MERCURY / 37

"You grow up and you watch the way music is sold and packaged on TV and stuff and it's really kind of like depressing sometimes. It's like, do we really want to be in that machine? I mean, I would love to make serious dough off of this, but the kind of things you'd have to do..." —John Watson, Our Mercury drummer

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# For your eyes only (but not your brain)

## WHY ARE THERE SO FEW POLITICAL PLAYS AT THE FRINGE?

DAVID BERRY / [david@vneweekly.com](mailto:david@vneweekly.com)

Though the people who put on the more than 100 shows that make up Edmonton's Fringe will rarely admit it, the term "fringe" is a bit of a misnomer when it comes to most plays that will go up this week in the venues dotting Old Strathcona. Any experienced Fringe-goer will likely be able to predict more than three-fifths of the shows on offer before even so much as looking at a program: an outrageous

### NEWS | FRINGE

sex comedy here, a tell-all one-man show there, and a few re-workings of theatre favourites and some existential dramas about love lost sprinkled around for good measure.

One of the more conspicuous absences from your typical Fringe lineup is what might be called the political play. The term's a bit reductionist, but broadly speaking, these works expressly engage with the kind of issues you'd find discussed in a newspaper (like, say, this one). Lost among the coming-of-age comedies and madcap improv are the plays that seem to really engage with the world around them as it is now: the personal may well be the political, but at the Fringe it tends to get wrapped so far under witty banter or soul searching it seems to lose all meaning.

Not that the Fringe is a complete desert when it comes to direct talk about the world around us. Despite the paucity of political performances, a few Edmonton playwrights are coming out with the intention of hoping to stimulate some debate and maybe win over some hearts and minds.

**JEREMY BAUMUNG MADE A** name for himself with his play *Dead Man Talking*, a Sterling-nominated piece about surviving a battle with meningitis that killed a Grant MacEwan Theatre Arts classmate. His newest play, *Homeless*, is about something equally close to his heart: telling the stories of the people he sees day in and day out during his work at a



downtown homeless shelter.

"These are stories that I think are important, that need to be told," explained Baumung over the phone from Saskatoon, where *Homeless* played as part of their Fringe festival a week ago.

"These are people that are easy to ignore," he continued. "[Homelessness] is getting some more attention now, with so many people having trouble finding homes, and the tent city going up and things like that, but people will turn their attention away fairly quickly, and even when they are looking at it, there are plenty of people on the streets they're willing to ignore."

For Mark Stubbings, not letting people turn away from an issue was one of the reasons he wrote his play, *Our Kind of Love is an Ugly Love*. Set in the days leading up to the Harper government's re-opening of the

debate on same sex marriage, *Ugly Love* follows a lesbian couple worried about what might happen to them when everything is said and done.

"[The vote] seemed to sort of stagnate the whole issue, and I think that's unfortunate," Stubbings said. "I think there's more to discuss here. For instance, I think we need to get past the point where it's okay for people to say something like, 'Well, I'm not homophobic, but I just don't want to see it.' Well, not wanting to see it is kind of homophobic."

While the passion that Baumung and Stubbings have for their subjects is evident, neither is entirely sure why political works seem to be considerable rarities at an event like the Fringe. As an unjaded, uncensored event created almost entirely by lottery, essentially all that is necessary

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# Mugabe's latest trick still won't stop runaway inflation in Zimbabwe

## COMMENT | DYER STRAIGHT

GWAYNE EVER  
[gwayne@vneweekly.com](mailto:gwayne@vneweekly.com)

Over 1000 years ago, according to ancient English tradition, King Canute set his throne on the shore and ordered the tide to stop rising. Just over a month ago, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe took an equally bold stand, ordering inflation to stop forthwith or else he'd send those responsible to jail.

Canute ended up with the waves sloshing round his knees, but at least he had the satisfaction of teaching his courtiers a lesson on the limits of royal power (for he didn't really think that his words could stop the tide). Mugabe will end up drowning in the inflation his own policies have created, but it will probably come as a great surprise to him, for he doesn't seem to understand that he can't just order it to stop.

"I believe inflation will hit 1 500 000 per cent by the end of 2007, if not before," said Christopher Dell, the US ambassador to Zimbabwe, in an interview with *The Guardian* in late June. "Prices are going up twice a day, in some cases doubling several times a week. It destabilizes everything. People have completely lost faith in the currency and that means they have lost faith in the government that issues it. By carrying out disastrous economic policies, the Mugabe government is committing regime change upon itself."

It was a succinct if undiplomatic summary of the state of play in Zimbabwe in late June, when there was still some hope that a sane solution to the crisis could be found. Zimbabwe's neighbours in southern Africa, almost all competently led democratic countries whose economies are flourishing, are desperate not to be dragged down by the one conspicuous failure in their midst.

The governments of the Southern African Development Community are already struggling with a wave of economic refugees from Zimbabwe, and they are well aware that the Masters of the Universe in far-away stock markets cannot tell the difference between one African country and another. If Zimbabwe dissolves into chaos, they will pay a heavy price in terms of lost foreign investment and higher interest rates on

foreign loans.

By early last month, South Africa was putting together a proposal to stop the hyper-inflation by pegging the Zimbabwean dollar to its own currency, the rand. Its huge foreign currency reserves would enable Zimbabwe to go on importing essential goods, the flow of economic refugees into South Africa would not become a tsunami, and gradually the internal situation might stabilize. The price, however, was agreement by Mugabe to key reforms that would restore democracy in the country.

**BUT THAT WOULD ULTIMATELY** mean surrendering power, something that is inconceivable to the 84-year-old autocrat who has ruled Zimbabwe for the past 27 years. Indeed, the country's rapid descent into poverty and chaos only began when Mugabe's rule was challenged. For the first two decades after the end of white minority rule, the Zimbabwean economy grew steadily: children went to school, people ate well, the future seemed bright. But then, to Mugabe's horror, Zimbabweans voted no in a 1999 referendum that would have made him president-for-life.

He felt threatened, so he came up with a policy that appealed to popular anti-white prejudices and also rewarded his closest supporters and kept them loyal. In 2000, he began confiscating the white-owned farms whose crops provided most of the country's foreign exchange, handing most of them over to his own political and military cronies—who had no idea how to run them.

Inevitably, the economy went into a steep decline, so Mugabe started printing money to bridge the gap in state revenues, and inflation took off. The economy has shrunk by half in the past seven years, and by last month the Zimbabwean dollar (official rate 250 to the US dollar) was trading on the black market at 300 000 to the US dollar.

Three million of Zimbabwe's 11 million people have fled abroad to seek work, mostly in South Africa. The money they send home is the only reason most Zimbabweans eat at all, since unemployment at home is 80 per cent. The average lifespan in the country has halved in 15 years. But the most urgent problem for Mugabe is that his own security forces cannot feed their families

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## From Russia with subs

ANDREW CISAKOWSKI / cis@vueweekly.com

**I**t's not every week a country makes a claim over a territory the size of western Europe, but Russia continues to make geopolitics exciting, capping off a month of outrageous rhetoric with a grandiloquent arctic expedition. A Russian flag, encased in titanium, was placed on the ocean floor 4200 metres below sea level in a symbolic gesture. The move is hugely popular in Russia and is being appropriately hyped by officials. The "Presidential Envoy" to the arctic, Artur Chillingarov, said it "was like landing on the moon."

The Kremlin claims the Lomonosov Ridge, an underwater mountain range running under the north pole, is an extension of the Russian landmass and therefore belongs to them. Made increasingly easy to reach by global warming, the area is rich in minerals like gold, tin, nickel and diamonds, and is thought to house as much as 25 per cent of the world's oil reserves as well as loads of natural gas. With the addition, Russia would add to its already considerable energy wealth.

How the Russians got there is, admittedly, pretty impressive—no other country could have done it. A mighty nuclear-powered icebreaker cleared the way and two state-of-the-art mini-submarines were used to get the flag down there. It was the first manned trip to the Lomonosov Ridge; at a time when we are accustomed to hearing of Russian backwardness, this was a stark reminder that the Kremlin still has access to world-class human and technological resources.

There are five countries with claims to the Arctic: Canada, Denmark (through Greenland), Norway, Russia and the US, all of who have been jockeying for position in this international gold rush. In 2004, Denmark filed a claim with the UN stating the Lomonosov Ridge was an extension of Greenland (the UN decided that there was not enough research to decide). In April of this year, Canadian scientists were sent to map out Lomonosov and determine if in fact the Ridge extends from Baffin Island.

The Conservative government has long had their eye on the Arctic—one campaign promise allotted \$8 billion dollars to the purchase of eight new Arctic patrol vessels—so it would make sense that Foreign Minister Peter MacKay was upset by Russia's audacity. "This isn't the 15th century," he said, "you can't go around the world and just plant flags and say 'We're claiming this territory.'" It will be interesting to see what he or anyone else can do about it. □

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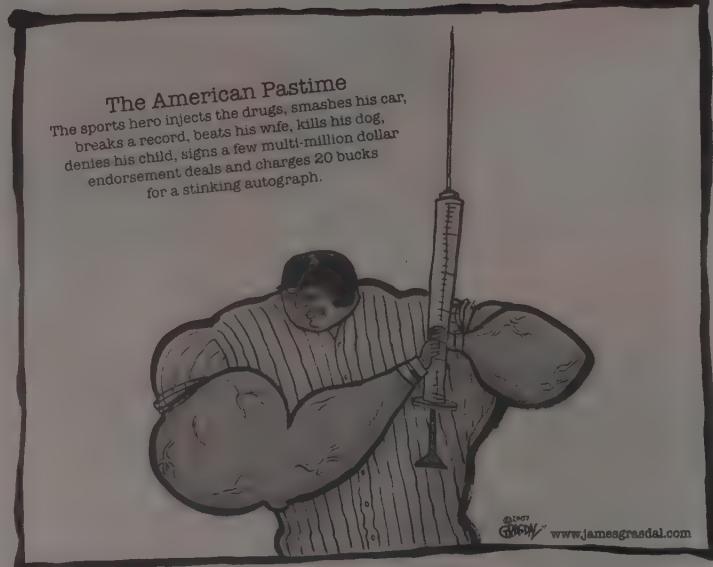
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## MAIL LETTERS

### IT'S BETTER WITHOUT A FILTER

I write from Mountain Light Photography, the business created by Galen and Barbara Rowell, concerning a piece Jeremy Derkson wrote in *Vue Weekly* mentioning Galen and his work ("Defined by the edible River Valley," Aug 9 – Aug 15).

In that piece Derkson said, "...while he used different light filters to enhance colour, Rowell reportedly never digitally doctors his images."

It's true that Galen didn't digitally "doctor" his photos. But it is potentially untrue that he used filters to enhance color. The only filters Galen used were polarizers and graduated neutral density filters. The former cuts glare and, to a limited extent, haze. The latter reduces the amount of light hitting the film in a certain portion of the composition, allowing the photographer to balance the exposure between, for example, the foreground and background.

DEAN STEVENS, IMAGE LICENSING MANAGER  
MOUNTAIN LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Jeremy Derkson responds: My intent was to represent Rowell's work in the best possible light (as I personally found it stunning), so if I did misrepresent his artistic process, it is owing to my understanding and explanation of the use of light filters. While I have some limited knowledge of photography (I don't by any means claim to be an expert), I evidently didn't explain myself properly here and for that I apologize. The point I intended to convey was that light filters bring out different tones or create contrasts, and clearly I should have described that better.

### MILKIN' IT

Regarding last week's edition of your health column ("In defence of dairy... well, the good kind of dairy, anyway," "Well, Well, Well, Aug 2 – Aug 8) I was disappointed to see how misinformed Connie Howard is about the nutritional quality of dairy products, especially since your readers are people who are interested in pursuing healthy lifestyles and good nutrition. The article is ridden with fallacies and misrepresentations of sound nutrition science which, if believed, could compromise the nutritional quality of your readers' diets.

From the discussion on vitamin D (Canadian dairies fortify milk with vitamin D3, not D2 as Howard states) through to her assessment of pasteurization and homogenization, it is evident that Howard did not call on qualified nutrition experts, like registered dietitians, in gathering her information.

Although there are many more statements in her article that should be corrected they are beyond the scope of a letter to the editor. Suffice to say that it is truly unfortunate that your magazine published an article that was so misleading. Your readers deserve better.

LEE FINELL, MHSA, RD, REGISTERED NUTRITIONIST  
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Connie Howard responds: given that Finell represents the dairy industry, her charges are not at all surprising and are worthy of a rebuttal. I have checked my claims with a nutritionist, and it is true that we need fat to absorb vitamin D; it is true that homogenization alters the fats to make them less accessible to us; it is true that pasteurization, as all high heat processes do, destroys enzymes, beneficial bacteria and vitamins. Processed milk is, like any other processed food, altered, and while it is still a good source of calcium, it is also inferior to the original product.

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## Taking in a more creative Southern Alberta dinosaur exhibit BIG VALLEY CREATION SCIENCE MUSEUM CLOSE TO ROYAL TYRRELL... WELL, IN DRIVING TIME, ANYWAYS

JAY SMITH / [jay@newswEEKLY.com](mailto:jay@newswEEKLY.com)

A foray into rural Alberta to visit Big Valley's Creationist Museum can only remind one that, typically, the Edmontonian vacationer has a surprising hubris.

Seriously: on our summertime road trips, while the glorious rolling greenery scrolls past the car window, while the rusty farm equipment and fresh BC fruit stalls alight in blissful hours of sunlight and the canola fields undulate beneath blue heavens, we're not typically thinking: "Hey, we've finally arrived in Alberta's Bible Belt!" Nor are we usually cracking up conversations about how great it is to vote Conservative.

This fact occurs to me as I am driving through Drumheller with my boyfriend, Chris, our toddler daughter, Gabi, on our way to the Creationist museum.

Still under the impression that the museum is actually close to Drumheller, I have been scrutinising the city with newfound scepticism. I notice a new "Badlands Passion Play" for which there are signs drilled onto light standards all over town. A hand full of houses sport over-sized "Alberta Social Credit" signs. There's the "Church of the Nazarene."

Everywhere, I conclude, there must

### NEWS | ROAD TRIP

be religious fanatics, dressed in normal clothing, speaking my language, but really belonging to planet Holy Roller.

As we drive, the late July temperatures blast through our un-air-conditioned car. Ten minutes into the highway, I realise we're sweltering because Gabi, playing earlier in the car, cranked the "heat" dial to maximum.

I joke that this is a sign from God transmitted through our curly-haired offspring: He's showing us what the fires of hell feel like for those who believe in evolution.

**NOTICE OUR CAREFREE** attitude. In addition to soft scientific reading material such as Jared Diamond's *The Third Chimpanzee*, I had mined the library for poetry celebrating Darwin. (There's not a lot. *Darwin and the Poets* by Lionel Stevenson is a good place to start.) I had visions of us reading these verses aloud in the car, priming our pro-scientific sympathies.

Of course, this approach utterly failed to prepare us for the Big Valley Creationist Museum.

The museum, which opened at the

beginning of June and entertains between 40 and 80 visitors daily, purports to mount a coherent and scientific response to evolution. To be blunt, it does neither.

Though the dinosaur-themed exterior of the shiny vinyl-new museum may remind you of Tyrrell, all resemblances end there: a poster on the front door advertises the long life span of the biblical patriarchs, and a timeline indicates exactly how world history can be crushed into 6000 years.

The small space doesn't mince details. Immediately inside the entrance the museum launches the visitor into the nitty-gritty of the creationist debate with science.

There is a large mechanical model of a bacteria's flagellum next to a real motor—each activates with the push of a button. The similarities in structure are noted.

The fact that this is a (disproven) argument against evolution, intending to illustrate the impossibility of a progressively evolved flagellum structure (versus one that God instantly created), is written nowhere.

The hermetically sealed "science" of creationism has much more to offer.

For the sake of this article, however, I will only offer one example of how the pieces come together.

**IN A 6000-YEAR-OLD** world, fossils cannot be old, so there is a so-called fossilised teddy bear (soaked in mineral-rich water), cowboy hat and cowboy boot on display. Obviously, these objects are new, so all fossils must be, too. There are also some aragonite deposits inside a metal pipe, also intended to illustrate the God-granted trickiness of rock.

To this insight, add the coexistence of humans and dinosaurs. The museum shows numerous instances in which the fossils of human footprints appear alongside those of dinosaurs. They also quote from Biblical scriptures (specifically the 40th and 41st verses of Job) mentioning a "Behemoth" and a "Leviathan," claiming that these are actually references to dinosaurs. (Many Biblical scholars consider this a misinterpretation layered on a bad translation.)

And where, you might ask, did these dinosaurs go? Why, they were flooded out in the deluge, of course.

And, according to the evidence culled from Britain's Carlisle Cathedral, the flood happened pretty damned recently. Creationists point to the engravings on the tomb of Bishop Richard Bell, buried in the Cathedral in 1496.

"Many of the engravings on the tomb are of animals familiar to 15th century people living in England," the museum text reads breathlessly. "Take a look at the photographs above.... The ancient artists knew what animals looked like, and they knew how to accurately depict them."

These "ancients" drew creatures that could have been lions, but could have been dragons, but we'll never know because their heads are smudged off.

The Creationists sketch on dinosaur heads and conclude that dinosaurs coexisted with humans as recently as 1496.

And now I do the math: the deluge must have happened after 1496. So: why was the Carlisle Cathedral perfectly preserved? How can there be no record of the flood in the myriad flourishing cultures (and their cultural records, many of which were written on the fragile medium of ink on paper) of the late 15th century?

Moreover, Shakespeare was born about one generation later, in 1564: why is there no mention of either the cohabitation of dinosaurs and humans in his very famous works or, more importantly, of the flood itself?

CONTINUES ON PAGE 10

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# Victory for Alberta or failure for Canada?

RICARDO ACUÑA / [valbert.ca/parkind](#)

"Don't mess with Alberta" and "mission accomplished," were the phrases with which Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach book-ended last week's annual premiers conference. The annual get together of provincial leaders, Stelmach's first, attempted to hammer out some concerted national action on the climate change front, as well as other national and provincial issues.

The Alberta Government's mandate heading into the conference was simple—Alberta will not accept any national plan which attempts to set hard absolute caps on greenhouse gas emissions.

At the conference it appeared that virtually every leader present was coming from a completely different position and had a completely different plan for dealing with emissions and climate change.

Eight of the provincial leaders—including the premiers of British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba—worked hard to promote what has come to be known as a "cap and trade" system for emissions. Such a system would see hard caps set on emissions, and the establishment of a national emissions trading market.

Alberta, with the support of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, made consensus on a cap and trade system an impossibility, exclusively because it would include absolute emissions cuts rather than the intensity targets Alberta has become so fond of.

Ontario's Dalton McGuinty expressed the frustrations of many of the premiers at Alberta's reluctance to move when he stated that "we can't shelter the oil and gas sector in Canada." Unfortunately, that same Dalton McGuinty was singing a different tune when he was the only one who stood in the way of consensus on the setting of California-level tailpipe emissions standards.

**WITH ALBERTA LEADING THE** pollution pack, accounting for fully one-third of Canada's emissions, and with Ontario coming in second, it is clear that there can be no genuine national progress on reducing emissions until those two provinces can overcome their single-minded focus on short-term financial growth and gain and focus instead on the long term impact of doing nothing for their provinces and the country as a whole.

Stelmach said during the conference, "I'm here to do what's best for Alberta and for Canada." The glee with which he claimed victory at the end of the conference suggests that the Government of Alberta still has not grasped that what is best for the province and the country is a future without the disastrous effects that global warming will have on our economy, environment and quality of life.

The coming pine beetle infestation, the looming water crisis in southern Alberta and the increase in severe weather are realities of climate change we are already facing. And Albertans understand this—a recent poll by the Pembina Institute found that 70 per cent of Albertans

believe it is a forum for individuals and organizations to comment on current events and broader issues of importance to the community. Their commentary is not necessarily the view of the organizations they represent or of Vue Weekly.

## DYER STRAIGHT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

because their huge pay rises still cannot keep up with inflation.

If the security forces turn against him, he is finished, so early last month he decreed deep price cuts for all consumer goods and sent the troops out to enforce them. The idea that you cannot simply impose lower prices, he scoffed,

is mere "bookish economics." But if it costs more for bakers to make bread than they get for selling it, then they stop baking.

A month later, the shelves were bare of staple foods like sugar, flour and cooking oil throughout Zimbabwe. Rural people, most of whom fell out of the cash economy some time ago, can scrape by somehow, but people in the urban areas are getting truly desperate.

Mugabe has played his last card, and

he will probably be gone by the end of the year. The pity is that the prosperous country he built in his first 20 years of power, when he could win the elections more or less honestly, is already gone. It will be hard to bring it back. ▶

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries. His column appears regularly in Vue Weekly.

want to see absolute reductions in emissions by the energy industry rather than the intensity-based model being promoted by their government.

That being the case, on whose behalf was Premier Stelmach celebrating when no agreement was reached?

**PERHAPS THE SITUATION** as it stands was best articulated by Northwest Territories Premier Joe Handley, who said at the end of the conference, "In the north, climate change is here. This is going to be a warning for all jurisdictions in Canada that it is happening now and there is a need to start taking some measures."

With a provincial election imminent in the next year, it will be up to Albertans to make their position on this issue clear to the government—this needs to be a major issue in the next election. Because until this government really understands what is at stake, and what it is Albertans want, then any type of progress on this issue at the national level will be an impossibility. ▶

Ricardo Acuña is Executive Director of the Parkland Institute, a non-partisan public policy research institute housed at the University of Alberta.



- 1) Beautiful Girls  
Sean Kingston
- 2) The Way I Are  
Timbaland
- 3) The Simpsons Theme  
Green Day
- 4) Crazy B\*tch  
Buckcherry
- 5) Umbrella  
Rihanna
- 6) Paralyzer  
Finger Eleven
- 7) Buy You A Drank (Shawty Snappin')  
T-Pain
- 8) Party Like A Rock Star  
Shop Boyz
- 9) This Is Why I'm Hot  
M.I.A.
- 10) Super Mario Bros.  
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These are the sorts of questions, however, that only arise from scrutiny of the museum. As I wander through the room, reading every panel and attempting to absorb every argument, three or four separate groups of obviously Creationist visitors pass through. They don't bother to read much at all: they press the button on the motorised bacteria, chorle at the fossilised teddy bear and bee-line with bliss toward the man working the museum.

**ONE COUPLE**, whom I overhear are from Calgary, is also reading everything. When I try eavesdropping on their conversation, they stop talking altogether. Kindred folk, I decide.

Edgar Nernberg, on the museum's Board, is tending the museum. ("I'm not Harry," he tells me, by way of introduction—Harry Niburg is the museum's prominent founder.)

According to Nernberg, though the

museum appeals to all demographics, there aren't actually a lot of curious non-Creationists like me visiting.

"We get some college kids from Calgary in who are curious," he said. "They've heard the news stories and they ask questions. So they're not entirely sympathetic... The university is really a closed shop as far as creationism goes."

Then I'm interrupted by another couple of Creationists coming to laud Nernberg.

"[The Tyrrel in] Drumheller is such a great place... it's just too bad that it's all fiction," gushed the man.

"They've just found a huge lake under Darfur!" the woman told Nernberg. "I mean, we don't even know what the interior of the earth is made of!"

Nernberg expresses agreement. I wonder how either of them explain volcanoes.

"People ask me how the freshwater marine life survived the flood," the woman continued. "But what they don't realise is that they adapted to live in salt water!" □

(Here, I must admit to stifling laughter as I frantically record the golden words. I admit, too, that I have trouble looking at people's faces. I don't trust myself not to smirk, or otherwise reveal my lifelong affiliation with scientific rationality.)

"Well," she concluded, heading for the door, "it's a pleasure to come and see some truth for a while."

Before I leave, Nernberg shares a little more of his truth with me.

He shows me charts that trace Prince William and Prince Harry's descent from Adam and Eve. Around 1100 AD, where the genealogy still features exclusively (what looks to me like) Celtic names, and I'm wondering where this post-1496 flood fits in, Nernberg admitted, "things get a bit controversial beyond this point."

"But with fossils, you're just spinning a story," he explained. "When you have written documents that corroborate what you believe, then you know it's true. But when you find a fossil, it's just assumption and storytelling." □



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

to put on a Fringe play is the whereabouts to put one together and a bit of luck to get your name picked, with the potential to attract hundred to a show and many more through publicity or controversy, the Fringe seems like the perfect venue to get a point across.

**ONE OF THE MAJOR** reasons for this dearth of political plays, Stubbings

thinks, might just be practicality: many of the people putting on Fringe shows are concerned about everything from getting their name out to using the box office to help pay bills, and might not want the notoriety a political message can bring.

"Politics can be a tricky thing to take on: the term 'political' can make things seem kind of dry, for a start," said Stubbings, who is quick to point out this is a designation he doesn't understand, since most political

debates can get fairly exciting.

Baumung, meanwhile, sees the edges of society's own blinders impeding the Fringe's view.

"It's pretty scary going to some of these places. I'm showing some pretty horrific things happening, and that can be too much for people, to see or to write about," Baumung explained. "I think some people view the Fringe as a chance to escape some of the pain, and just focusing on the wonderful things happening on stage. I think that

obviously has its place, but I like to use my voice as an artist to get people thinking about those kinds of things."

Both are tempting explanations but, as Stubbings points out, they are hardly all-encompassing: many writers and actors will expressly talk about trying to challenge people's perceptions. Perhaps the real reason there is not much engagement with the real world, Stubbings speculates, is because artistic folks can get a little too concerned with what's happening

within the four walls of the theatre.

"Sometimes I think people think perhaps they're being more revolutionary than they actually are," Stubbings says. "Having a radical take on *Macbeth* might really shake up some of the drama professors around town, but I think the general public just kind of shrugs and goes, 'Okay, that's people dressed up like clowns doing Shakespeare,' and that's not exactly taking a risk, or even necessarily saying something to them." □

# I don't get hosed

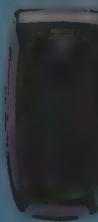
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# Watch out, Radioactive Man!

HEALTH

## WELL, WELL, WELL

BONNIE HOWARD  
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Our health—often thought to be simply a product of the right genes, healthy lifestyles and success with avoiding germs, mosquito bites and toxic chemicals in our food and water—is also a product of socio-economic equality. The more evenly wealth is distributed in a society, the better the health of the society, says epidemiologist George Kaplan. Disparity of income, not average income, predicts death rates in a society.

We know intuitively that trying to keep the kids dressed like their peers is killing us; we know that in saying so we aren't trying to be dramatic.

There are, however, always going to be those inclined to put the free market ahead of all else, keep that inequality growing and make sure they and theirs at least are well-insured. (Though they will soon enough discover the short-comings of a pharmaceutical approach to health care.) Those same people and their policies will keep us (and our planet) heading toward illness in more ways than we can count, one currently controversial issue being nuclear power solutions to our energy crisis.

We know that nuclear power depends on uranium mining, and we know that the postwar uranium boom of the '40s produced lung cancer in miners, birth defects in children and ovarian and testicular cancer increases of 1500 per cent in the rest of us.

We also know that 99 per cent of the uranium mined for nuclear power needs to be enriched, a process which leaves in its wake depleted uranium—which is, despite its innocuous-sounding

name, a highly radioactive, unsafe and environmentally persistent product.

There are, according to anti-nuclear activist Patricia Hartnagel, currently an estimated one billion tons of depleted uranium waste stockpiled in the U.S.

**BUT DEPLETED URANIUM** improves the firing range, strength and accuracy of weapons, and is therefore popular with weapons manufacturers. The problem with these weapons is that depleted uranium is aerosolized on impact and released into the atmosphere, where winds carry it anywhere they want—like to unsuspecting lungs, which means it doesn't affect only far-away people that don't register on our radar.

These weapons were used in the Persian Gulf War and are currently being used in Iraq and Afghanistan. Radiation-linked illness sounds like an excellent way to support our troops and to reduce the anger of the people of Afghanistan, doesn't it?

And with the 62nd anniversary of Hiroshima fresh in our minds, there is also the issue of nuclear weapons, an issue actually no more complicated than the elephant in the living room, though many would have us believe otherwise.

From Robert Wright, a member of one of Edmonton's peace groups, Project Ploughshares, I learned that the Aug. 7, 1945 newspapers had lots to say about Hiroshima, but the focus was on how this spectacularly powerful new weapon was going to bring peace to the world. One single and lonely article referred to the horrific threat it might be to humanity. Which, means that including independent and alternative news sources in our diets, and supporting politicians who think beyond the most immediate bottom line, are actions probably as important to our health as buying organic or going to the gym have the potential to be.



## Who needs comic books when you have video games (and Wikipedia)?

GAMES

## INFINITE LIVES

DARREN ZENKO  
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Almost daily, I have a "what did I do before Wikipedia?" moment. What did I do without a semi-reliable bog-brain dispensing information on bees, old movie stars, electrical wiring, martial arts and geology to fill in the blanks and satisfy the datawhims of the moment? I wrestled with Google or some other search engine, I guess, or cracked my grandfather's '30s-vintage encyclopedias ("COMPUTER; see: CALCULATING MACHINE"), or—most likely—bluffed the knowledge and hoped nobody called me on it.

Something was bugging me, though, as I refreshed my Silver Age details and my Fantastic Four family history, puzzled out cosmogony and got up to speed on the Universe's latest super-upehaves. Down at the bottom of pretty much every second entry, in the "in other media" section, was a reference to that character, item or location's inclusion in the *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* videogame(s). I'd avoided that

encyclopedia turn old bad habits into new compulsions. What was once a diversion for bedtime and bathroom visits—leafing through my old, dog-eared issues of the *Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*, trudging through decades of convoluted continuity—has become electrified, hyperspeeded. Now, I drill and crawl for hours through Spider-Man backstory, Avengers minutiae, the whole pre-history and post-future of Lee/Kirby's mad cosmos, each new page itself spawning tab after tab of reference and connection. It never ends; it's intoxicating.

Something was bugging me, though, as I refreshed my Silver Age details and my Fantastic Four family history, puzzled out cosmogony and got up to speed on the Universe's latest super-upehaves. Down at the bottom of pretty much every second entry, in the "in other media" section, was a reference to that character, item or location's inclusion in the *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* videogame(s). I'd avoided that

title for nearly a year on account of third-person superhero bash-em-ups being, in my experience, one of the most reliably tedious of pocket genres, but the ridiculous, impossible crossover breadth these infections suggested had me hooked. So ... the action takes place in Atlantis, Murderworld, Asgard, Mephisto's Realm, the Skrull thereworld and the SHIELD Helicarrier. Pretty much every major Marvel character—even those that kind of hate each other—is playable or supporting, while every major bad guy—even those that kind of hate each other, and including Galactus—gets a shot at the heroes? OK, they got me; here's my money. Now, how do they make it work?

**POORLY, OF COURSE.** This is the fan-service kludge to end all fan-service kludges, an exercise not so much in story-telling as in excuse-making. Doom steals a Super-Soldier Serum formula in order to bribe Loki to impersonate the Mandarin to dis-

tract the heroes so Doom can capture Jean Grey and give her to Arcade while Doom uses a SHIELD-developed Mutant Amplifier to boost Nightcrawler's power enough to open a portal to Mephisto's realm as Loki uses mutated super-soldier shock troops to storm Asgard while ... um ... jeez, Atlantis should be in there somewhere. What did Atlanta have to do with anything? It's getting so hazy ... I have to focus on what really matters. Have I unlocked the "Classic" armor for Iron Man? Have I smashed enough Doombots and Ultron to earn the right to re-skin Thor as his awesome intergalactic counterpart, Beta Ray Bill? Have I collected all five hidden Black Panther action figures?

And there you have it, the heart of the thing. Progress through the game itself is a straightforward exercise in picking a single brutal attack—go, Iron Man!—and mashing it over and over, bullying your way through to the next gratifying cameo ("OMG! Drag-on Man!") and speed-skimming the atrocious dialogue. But the real grab, the thing that keeps a Marvel nerd down in these eye-glazing trenches, is the "just one more" psychosis of unlockables. First it's working Tony Stark's way into his old-school red-and-golds. Then it's a space-alien Thor, a WWII-era Captain America, a Wild West Ghost Rider. Hours are devoured, showers forsaken, backache and eyestrain endured, all for the rinky-dink payoff of looking at the same characters I've been looking at for a quarter-century, except this time I get to jam on buttons that make them shoot beams and punch robots.

Why do I want this? Because I raised myself on those comics. My deepest, personal fantasy life is set in that unwieldy universe of coincidence and connection, and my own imagination is rooted in the imagination of the thousands of writers, artists and editors who created it. And I'm a sucker—a literal, groping-for-the-teat, childlike sucker—for anything, however thin, that brings me back there. ■

# Edmontonians sweet on the new trend for fries

ERIN MIKALUK / erin@vneweekly.com

I'll admit it: I'm a traditionalist. I've always liked my fries white, salted, crispy and loaded with ketchup. However, Edmontonians used to hearing the age-old question, "Would you like fries with that?" better get used to the follow-up, "Will that be sweet potato or regular?" An increasing number of Edmonton restaurants are jumping on the sweet potato fry bandwagon.

Originating from Central America, this tasty little vegetable is considered one of the oldest. It dates back in farming practices about 4500 years. Sweet potatoes are a staple dish in numerous countries, including the United States, China and Indonesia, and are praised by many—including Oprah—for the health benefits they provide.

What is it about this new twist on the traditional fry that captures taste buds? More importantly, where should you go to experience the best fries? I set out to visit three restaurants which claim to have found the secret to cooking up the most delicious sweet potato fries.

## BLUE PLATE DINER

My first stop was a downtown, artsy bistro—the Blue Plate Diner—where 90 per cent of the customers order sweet potato fries. The Blue Plate has served them for over three years.

The host greeted me with a song. He placed a bottle of ketchup on my table and exclaimed ironically, "I'm going to leave this here, but don't feel pressured to eat our fries." It's as if he knew why I was there.

The fries (\$5) came in a large white bowl, packed to the brim with more than enough for two to share. They were crisp, lightly browned and fresh, hand-cut by the chef. Slightly tougher



## DISH | SWEET POTATOES

than the regular fry, each bite was succulent and sweet.

The star of the show was the accompanying tangy, mayo-based dip. It was full of spice and burst with flavor the second it touched my tongue. I asked the server what it contained and was promptly denied.

"I don't even know what's in it," he admitted. "And trust me, I've asked!" From the delicate heat that spread over my tongue, I thought a mixture of cayenne pepper, garlic and parsley. It was a very good start to my hunt for the best sweet potato fries in town,

and a hard act to follow.

With one down, it was off to the Delux Burger Bar.

## DELUX BURGER BAR

Six bucks at Delux bought me a hefty order of sweet potato fries "à la carte," and I do mean à la carte. I laughed as I saw the server heading our way holding a mini shopping cart containing a Chinese take-out box overflowing with fries. Presentation certainly did count. I loved the fries even before my first bite. Imported from California as whole sweet potatoes, the menu said they were "fresh to order from scratch and have zero trans fat."

CONTINUE ON PAGE X



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# Meet the meatless at the Lemongrass

CONNIE SHERRARD / connie@vneweekly.com

The late evening sun was slanting across the strip mall's parking lot as my sister and I approached the **Lemongrass Café**. Ah, Edmonton: City of Champions, strip malls and asphalt parking lots. Sometimes, however, if you brush off the dust of the chain restaurants, video rental places and fast-food drive-thrus, you discover a gem like the Lemongrass Café.

We pulled open the door and stepped into the calm interior of the restaurant. Bright and airy, the open room was surprisingly busy for later on a Thursday evening. Even so, we had less than 10 seconds to glance around before the server led us past the artfully-arranged greenery and to our table. Two glasses of water arrived before we could open our menus, and we sipped contentedly as we flipped through the pages. Only one was important to us, however: the very back page. "Vegetarian Selections" called to us, softly.

I am vegan. This often means that I test a server's patience and know edge to the extreme. I ask a million little questions about what is in the food. A few trips back and forth to the kitchen to quiz the chef are required, but I can always find something to eat.

At the Lemongrass, they have already kindly set aside a page of items for the veggies among us. I made sure that the curry only had coconut milk and the salad roll dipping sauce had no fish flavouring added, at which point my sweet, omnivorous-yet-in-love-with-vegan

food sister and I settled on dinner. Two salad rolls would start us off, followed by stir-fried mixed vegetables in black bean sauce and the vegetari-

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an special, listed as vegetables and tofu in a creamy coconut curry sauce. We settled back in our chairs, anticipating the arrival of our dinners.

**THE LEMONGRASS CAFÉ** is a calm, cool space decorated austerely in various shades of green. There are beautiful black-and-white photographs adorning the walls, and the tables are simple, surrounded with wicker-backed metal chairs. As we chatted, we noticed an absence of music in the background and we could easily hear snippets of other diners' conversations when we reached a pause in our own. The atmosphere seemed geared toward a casual dinner with little lingering, rather than a comfortable, drawn-out evening. None of this mattered when our salad rolls were placed on the table in front of us.

Presented on a shell-shaped white plate, the two plump rolls were arranged to show the mint leaf visible through the translucent rice-paper wrapper. Soft and just a little tacky on the outside, Vietnamese salad rolls are a far cry from their cousins, the deep-fried and crispy



spring roll. Where the spring roll is hot and greasy, the salad roll is cool and refreshing.

We quickly concluded that double-dipping was OK under these particular circumstances and dove in. The first bite had a little bit of all the ingredients, and the flavours unfolded as we chewed. The largely tasteless rice paper roll was packed full of skinny vermicelli noodles, a strip of fried tofu, slivered cucumbers and a whole, fresh mint leaf. These were complemented perfectly by the rich-tasting peanut dipping sauce, flecked with a spicy chili paste and sprinkled with finely-chopped peanuts. After devouring our one roll each, we exchanged a glance. I knew exactly what she

was thinking: we should have ordered four. Given the amount of food yet to come, this would have been ridiculously unnecessary.

**EVERY OTHER PATRON** in the restaurant stopped chewing and turned to look as our food, held aloft by the server, sizzled loudly on its cast-iron serving dishes. Aromas intermingled as we let them cool slightly on the table: sweet, tangy, smoky and exotic. We grabbed spoons and dug in, ladling hot spoonfuls of tofu, vegetables and sauce over the white rice that came on the side. Interestingly enough, both dishes were exactly the

PHOTO BY JEFFREY TAYLOR

**FOOD NEWS!** **DISH WEEKLY**

## DISH PREPARES A NEW MENU

Every once in a while, we like to spice things up here at Dish. As a result, we have invited some new chefs aboard.

Connie Sherrard is our token vegan, who will visit restaurants to report on the state of veggie-only dining around town. She will also answer questions that she is invariably asked about her food philosophy in a province where even our cows eat steak.

Jan Hostyn is a stay-at-home mom with two stubborn kids. An ideal dinner out means pizza; granted, it is usually the thin crust, wood-fired oven variety, but still pizza. She plans to open her family's eyes to a new world of cuisine because it's now part of her job.

Erin Mikaluk works for the provincial government, but don't hold that against her: she's taking on an alt-weekly gig for the street cred. She's helped out in various food festivals and has an enthusiasm for taste testing that is second to none.

Keep in mind that we're always looking for feedback. Let us know what you think about the new crew, or let them know directly. Each one is anxious to hear from you through their brand new @vneweekly.com address.

*Dish Weekly spills the beans on culinary happenings around town. Got an event, an announcement or some substantiated gossip? Email dish@vneweekly.com or fax 426.2889.*



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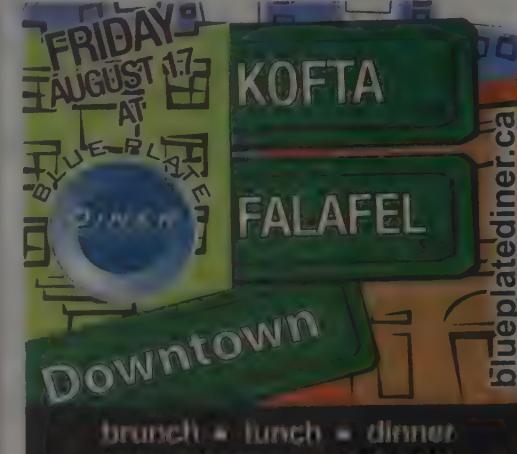
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## SWEET POTATOES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Cut in a variety of sizes and shapes, the fries were soft, sprinkled with just the right amount of salt, and melted in my mouth. Dipped in the accompanying chipotle mayo dip, they delivered the winning fry/dip combination of salt and spice.

I asked why more than half of the customers ordered sweet potato fries. Our server considered and replied, "Our staff definitely likes them better than the regular!"

I felt so stuffed that I couldn't imagine another piece of potato. Off to Da-De-O's, my final destination.

### DA-DE-O'S

When most Edmontonians are asked about sweet potato fries, three little syllables come to mind: Da-De-O's. The restaurant claims to be the first in Edmonton to serve them. They've been frying this tasty vegetable since 2001, and with 85 per cent of their customers coming in just to taste "Uncle Avi's" sweet potato fries, they don't plan on stopping any time soon; in fact, they've done away with regular fries altogether.

As I settled into my seat and felt myself carried back via the 1950s' beat of Da-De-O's, I wondered if I could actually fit one more fry into my over-stuffed belly. My apprehension was immediately silenced as my plate arrived.

I tasted the satisfying sweetness of years of frying perfection. Loaded

with a special kind of chili seasoning, dusting my fingertips with red, the fries (\$6) were to die for and gave a whole new meaning to "finger-lickin' good." They were spicy and hot, providing smoky bursts of flavour with every addictive bite.

Soft on the inside, crunchy on the outside, I knew why sweet potato fries have been the featured menu item for nearly a decade. The herb-mayo dip was an admirable partner and offered a cooling effect to each sweet and spicy fry. I had no trouble finishing my third sweet potato plate of the day and knew that I had found my winner.

### THE RESULTS

The competition was close, but Da-De-O's seasoning-packed sweet potato fries reign supreme, but don't count the others out. Delux serves theirs in a shopping cart for hands-down best presentation and the Blue Plate Diner's incredible sauce is a must-try for every fry lover.

I'm converted. I've jumped on the sweet potato bandwagon. But be warned: during my hunt, I also busted a myth. Sweet potato fries are not healthier for you.

Although the sweet potato itself packs a nutritional punch, rich in fibre and vitamins A and C, and is rumoured to help prevent diseases like lung cancer, its fried form does not.

Eat all the sweet potato fries you want, but for the right reason—their unique and irresistible taste. You will be able to join in the conversation when these little vegetables become the talk of the town. □

## Vietnamese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

same except for the cooking sauce, even though their descriptions were different on the menu.

Both were a medley of snow peas, celery, bok choy, mushrooms, carrots, broccoli and fried tofu, quickly stir-fried over high heat to retain flavour and crunch. The curry sauce was light, sweet and tangy, not spicy in the least. The flavour of the thin sauce seemed almost lost on some of the vegetables, but the tofu soaked it all up. Each piece was chewy and full of curry.

Because both entrees turned out to be so similar, we made the inevitable comparisons. The clear winner was the black bean sauce, a complex blend that was smoky, sweet and balanced with just the right amount of garlic. It coated the vegetables and tofu perfectly. Small black beans were scattered throughout. As I was taking seconds from the dish, I caught my sister stealing more sauce to ladle over her rice. Luckily, there was enough of everything that we ended up taking home a mound of leftovers, and the server was kind enough to throw in extra rice to make the meal complete.

We paid the bill (\$35 including tax and tip) and stepped out of the restaurant's cool interior, back onto the hot asphalt under the neon glow of the strip mall. A bag full of tasty food will serve to remind us that not every strip mall lacks a soul. □



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# U-pick the best strawberries yourself

JAN HOSTYN / jan@vneweekly.com

I awoke to the sun just breaking over the horizon, casting a beautiful orange glow over my part of the world. The sky was bright, cloudless and utterly beautiful. I could barely contain my excitement: today was the day!

After a long, bleak and dreary winter, today was the day I could finally savour a real strawberry.

Oh, I know that we can buy strawberries year-round. However, the strawberries at the supermarket, the identical pale pink ones with a rubbery texture and a flavour reminiscent of cardboard, are not real strawberries. Imagine vibrant red berries, each with its own unique shape and size, each literally ready to burst with vivid, juicy flavour. Those are real strawberries.

Where do such strawberries exist? One good place is a farmer's market, which will offer a much more unique shopping experience than the supermarket, but it's not the best place. I love the farmer's market, but I want to actually pick my own berries, choosing only the perfectly ripe ones to pop in my mouth. Only when my mouth needs a rest do I place a berry in my bucket.

Gently pluck each berry from its resting spot, nestled in the bushes. Fill your bucket until the strawberries are perched so precariously that they threaten to tumble out with the slight-

est movement. Anticipate savouring those delicious berries on the long car ride home. Try them fresh, heaped in a bowl with a drizzle of honey, blended with yogurt and juicy mango in a refreshing smoothie, or pureed and frozen into a decadent ice cream, its flavour so fresh that you will never look at regular strawberry ice cream the same way again.

To fully appreciate this delectable berry, I seek out a U-pick strawberry patch, which is precisely where I was headed on this beautiful day.

I QUICKLY GRABBED a few empty ice cream pails and loaded up the car. My daughter put on her multi-coloured "strawberry-picking clothes" which are best at hiding the splotches of vivid red strawberry juice that dribble down her chin and land haphazardly on unsuspecting clothing. We decided to forgo breakfast.

After what seemed like an eternity but was actually only about 25 minutes, we pulled into *Bio-Way' Gardens* just past Leduc. Grabbing our buckets, we set off down the garden path, stepping around errant berries that had toppled from other pickers' pails. Rows upon rows of strawberry plants greeted us. A gentle breeze rustled their leaves as if they were waving hello, their heavenly aroma teasing our nostrils.

We received instructions on where to start picking and set to work. Glimpses of red peeked out at us, but it wasn't until we actually bent down and parted the fuzzy leaves that we saw strawberry heaven. Masses of beautiful, plump and juicy berries beckoned to us.

Eagerly, we plucked the biggest and ripest berries from the vines and immediately popped them into our mouths. The taste was exquisite. As the warm juice burst from her mouth, my daughter's strawberry-picking clothes definitely came in handy.



## DISH U-PICKS

Finally, our mouths and fingers stained with crimson, our stomachs were satisfied—for the moment. We concentrated on filling up our buckets.

Berry after berry was gently picked and placed in the pail, each one redder and juicier than the last. The more we picked, the more we saw. No wonder we saw berries that had spilled from other pails; it was almost impossible to leave when we kept finding "just one more."

At last, when no more berries could possibly fit either pails or stomachs, we made our way back to the farmhouse to pay for our haul. The journey was somewhat precarious because our pails were literally overflowing. As I handed over the \$12 for two heaping ice cream pails, I couldn't help but

think what a wonderful bargain it was.

WE RELUCTANTLY LEFT behind the lush greenness of the fields, the gentle breeze and the tantalizing smells. The peacefulness and solitude of the country were about to be replaced by the noise and bustle of the city. After one last glance behind us, we backed up the car and made our way home.

The drive home was quiet and reflective. The aroma of the berries floated through the car, inspiring creative thoughts of how to use them all. Eating them just as they were, in all their simple glory, was a given. However, we had far too many berries for that. Thoughts of tender strawberry muffins, strawberry-blueberry pie with a buttery streusel, refreshing strawberry lemonade and luscious chocolate-dipped strawberries all came to mind. How about flaky strawberry scones with a drizzle of bitter-

sweet chocolate? The possibilities were endless.

I went to bed extremely content that night, stuffed full of the most delicious strawberries ever. The strawberry season in Edmonton is almost over, but I took comfort in the fact that I had frozen some of those precious berries. I may have a little more time for raspberries, and Evans sour cherries are about to come available. There's even an apple u-pick later in August that continues through September.

I imagined sitting in front of my fireplace in the midst of winter, laying a blanket down, lighting some candles and slowly devouring a rich and creamy strawberry shortcake that tasted like summer while the wind whistled and snow swirled outside.

If you've never been to a U-pick, go. If you have, go again. The taste is exquisite, the aroma is heavenly and the experience is priceless. v

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# Paddling into the ripples of time off Haida Gwaii

GORDON DANIEL / gordon@vneweekly.com

Every summer, my family and a few friends plan a sea kayaking expedition somewhere along the beautiful west coast of British Columbia. It's always the highlight of my year. We paddle from island to island, camp on the beaches and soak up that splendid serenity I just can't seem to find anywhere else. This year we chose an especially ambitious destination: We headed out to the Queen Charlotte Islands to tour through the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site.

The Queen Charlotte Islands, also known as Haida Gwaii, are located about 100 km off BC's northern coastline. It's a unique world perched on the edge of the continent, where mountains of ancient rainforest meet the wild and rugged coast of the Pacific Ocean. This remote 400-island archipelago is also one of the richest and most diverse biological areas in North America. Some of the largest trees in the world are found in the moist, moss-carpeted forests.

We planned a six-day kayak expedition into Gwaii Haanas Park. There are no roads in the park and the only way to reach it is by boat or float plane. We paddled our homemade, handcrafted wooden kayaks over 100 km into Gwaii Haanas and arranged a charter to pick up our crew of eight and our boats at a predetermined destination.

**ONE OF MY FAVOURITE** things about camping out of a kayak is that you don't have to sacrifice much luxury due to lack of space. It's amazing just how much gear will fit inside. First we



packed our gear and fresh water into the boats. Then we crammed as many cans of beer as possible into the remaining nooks and crannies, even managing to stuff in another box of wine. Fully loaded, we finally launched our vessels.

As we navigated our way, point to point though the inlets and around the islands, we lost track of the number of bald eagles we saw. Everywhere we looked we found these magnificent birds sitting in trees,

## KAYAK QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS

soaring over our heads and hopping among the rocks at low tide. Ravens were also plentiful and often visited our campsites, clucking and talking in their own peculiar language.

The vast array of sea life thriving in the intertidal areas is astounding. While floating through a narrow channel in just half a metre of water, we saw a brilliant kaleidoscope of purple, orange, blue and red starfish. Beds of shellfish were pocked with brightly coloured bat stars and spiny sea urchins, scurrying kelp crabs and large sea cucumbers. Countless translucent jellyfish drifted by amidst waving kelp and sea grass meadows. Further along the narrows we spotted a black bear scampering over rocks and poking for food. The ever-present eagles watched our passage. This intimate encounter with such a spectacular, flourishing ecosystem had each of us calling out and pointing from our boats.

Besides the incredible wildlife-viewing opportunities, the big draw for us to visit Gwaii Haanas was to see the remains of the old Haida villages that used to prosper here. The islands are home to 10 000 years of Haida history. The Haida were one of the most culturally rich and developed people to inhabit early North America. Although the island climate was often tough and unforgiving, an

abundance of food was available. This allowed the Haida time to cultivate their culture, art and customs over many centuries. Incredible stands of original totem poles and remains of massive longhouses pay silent tribute to their artistry.

Unfortunately, contact with European explorers introduced new diseases that decimated the native population from an estimated 20 000 to fewer than 500. The survivors gathered together and to this day carry on a tradition of respect and intimacy with the land and sea. The remains of the old villages are now protected inside Gwaii Haanas Park and minded by Haida watchmen. These guardians look after the natural and cultural heritage of these important sites and also act as a point of contact for visitors.

Several days into our voyage we stopped at the village site of Tanu. At one time, there were between 25 and 40 longhouses here, and many more totem poles. Little is left standing now, but the spirit of the place is still strong. The Watchmen gave us a tour through the site and spoke proudly of the people and their accomplishments. The massive house depressions in the ground and the fallen, moss-covered posts and poles give a vivid sense of the once-flourishing village.

ON DAY FIVE we reached our final destination: Hotspring Island. The small hot-spring system that gives the island its name boils to the surface in several locations, creating pools of wonderfully hot mineral water to soak in.

The rock pools sit right beside the ocean, just meters above the water.

After five days of paddling, the anticipation of actually reaching this place had us all giddy. As we paddled towards the island we suddenly saw a burst of water shoot from the sea, accompanied by a hollow whoosh. A humpback whale breached the surface just 100 meters from our kayaks. Then another one rose beside the first! We watched the two whales breach and dive several more times as we made our way to Hotspring Island. Seeing the whales from our kayaks was a special, rewarding experience. It felt like these magical creatures were sharing their waters with us. And after paddling so far to get there, we felt we had earned it.

Once ashore, we rinsed off in the solar bathhouse and made our way down the rock path to the largest of the pools. The view of the ocean and surrounding islands was enchanting. A soothing day of soaking worked its magic on our weary muscles. The Haida once frequented these springs to heal and nourish body and soul. It's easy to see why.

The Queen Charlotte Islands are truly one of the most isolated places I've ever been. This was not like any kayak trip I'd ever done before. This place was different; it was truly special. It's peaceful, serene and the pace of life is wonderfully slow. The wildlife is abundant, the history is fascinating, and the people that live here just seem to smile more often. This may be one of my favourite places on Earth. ▼

# Nourishing an international-calibre athlete

CHRISTOPHER THRALL / christopher@vneweekly.com

The pressure is on for the Canadian Men's National Volleyball team. On Aug 15, the 12th-ranked Canadian side met its rivals, the eighth-ranked United States team, in the preliminary rounds of the America's Cup in Manaus, Brazil. On Aug 17 they play Argentina for a chance to move on and compete for the title and US\$100 000 in prize money.

Murray Grapentine, middle blocker and captain of the team, admits that they lost a little spirit after two injuries in an important Pan-American game last month landed them in seventh place. They're aiming to make up for that poor showing with a better result in the America's Cup, and maintaining peak physical condition is imperative. That said, how does a team of international-calibre athletes nourish their bodies for the rigours of competition?

"The team does have a nutritionist, but we're not on a strict diet," says Grapentine. "I eat more or less whatever I want. I just try to make sure that I am somewhat balanced and eating enough calories." Still, he does follow a couple of the nutrition tips from the team nutritionist, such as eating a snack within the 15-minute

SPORT

## NUTRITION

window after every practice.

If he seems casual about the advice, it's not like Grapentine is new to nutrition, competition or the pressure. He grew up in Wetaskiwin, went to the University of Alberta for Physical Education and then made the national volleyball team in 1997. The selection camp was rough his first year, but as a veteran he isn't subjected to the same process. However, there is always a chance that an under-performer could lose his spot on the team.

**THE DIET THAT HELPS** Grapentine performs will help any equally ambitious athlete reach his or her top potential. The night before a game, he favours a high-carb meal. On game day, his day starts with cereal and an easy one-hour practice. A big lunch is essential, usually consisting of pasta and a chicken breast with a serving of veggies. He gets a snack down around 5 pm before an 8 pm game, and follows the game with a full meal. Finally, depending on how the game went (and the timing of his next practice or

game), he might have a beer or two to round out the final meal.

It's easy to get wound up about protein intake for maximizing gain or maintaining a precise electrolyte balance. However, Grapentine just watches what he eats for balance and calories. A qualified nutritionist or di-

"I eat more or less whatever I want. I just try to make sure that I am somewhat balanced and eating enough calories."

tician can build an easy menu to follow for fitness or athletic goals, but it ultimately has to fit into your lifestyle.

Just remember that even world-class volleyball stars can quaff a couple of beers every once in a while. With moderation and balance, along with talent and drive, a kid from Wetaskiwin made it to international competition. What are you going to do? □

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## From lush valley to alpine saddle, New Zealand trails amaze hikers

BRIAN ZUREK with Dee Montie / brian@vueweekly.com

Much like Canada, New Zealand is an outdoor wonderland complete with oceans, rivers, mountains and great hiking trails. On two recent backpacking trips, we discovered the differences between one of New Zealand's highly acclaimed "Great Walks," the 55 km Milford Track, and the lesser-known, 77 km Rees-Dart Track. From valley floor to alpine pass and back again, both tracks scale and descend through native beach forest, sub-alpine scrub, tussocks and alpine herbs. In terms of environment, the most striking feature of the Milford Track, as it began, was the vegetation. Everything was lush, green and insulated with moss, from the richly carpeted forest floor, through the deep fern understory, to the skyward forest canopy. Rugged peaks were hidden from the valley floor, but the Clinton River was picturesque as it poured through the forest.

The Rees-Dart opened with a different feel: a spectacular wet and muddy-footed view from the wide welcoming valley of the Rees River. The track crossed and re-crossed the Rees River and its many tributaries (wet feet), and numerous bogs (wet, muddy feet). Wet trails aside, the golden grassy fields that gave way to rolling hills of native beach forest that gave way to exposed rocky slopes, glaciers and sharp mountain peaks were inspiring.

Hiking through alpine trails is often most rewarding because of the wonderful views that the trails provide. From Milford's Mackinnon Pass (1069 m), more distant peaks and glacial views were visible than from the Rees Pass (1471 m), but the superior elevation of the Rees-Dart saddle gave its alpine environment a grander feel. Alpine views accompanied us down from the Rees-Dart, while waterfalls,

### TREK | NEW ZEALAND

pools and springs were companions down from the Mackinnon Pass.

The Milford track was at its best in the wet, during heavy downpours from the Fiordland sky. The rain made the valley come alive with countless vertical falls of water cascading down the steep rocky walls in every direction. The sight of rushing waterfalls in the morning where there were none the night before was incredible, but not as incredible as the sound that filled the valley, the sound of uncontrolled and raging water above and all around us. The thunder of rushing water trumps all. But rain or not, water was a constant and glorious ending to the Milford track. Vista of sheer cliffs that plunge vertically into the tranquility of the Milford Sound made for a sweet ending to a wonderful hike, even in the mist and cloud that accompanied our view.

**WHERE THE MILFORD** offered water, the Rees-Dart offered its best in the alpine. And the best of the alpine was delivered in a day's side trip (16 km return) to the Cascade saddle (1524 m). The Cascade saddle was the highlight of the five-day tramp for us, with its amazing rugged vistas of the Dart Glacier and Mount Aspiring. With a seemingly unrestricted, personal, and complete view of the world around.

The Milford Track is a less personal super highway with at least 14 000 travellers attempting the hike each year, most of whom flood the trail during the summer months. Hiking in May (off season) meant that we avoided the crowds; however, we were hardly alone on the trail, and the high-volume conversations and splays of gear by our younger roommates were

startling enough to make us want to retreat outside to the rain. We overheard conversations such as whether, like, one can eat, like, rolled oats, like, raw. It took a lot to hold back from saying, "Ever heard of, like, muesli?"

Still, we couldn't help but feel sorry for the unprepared hikers we saw. Some came with a pack the size and weight of an antique trunk, such as the three who brought a heavy, two-element stove, a large wok fry pan (glass lid included), ceramic bowls and a wooden cutting board. Then there was the chain-smoker wearing jeans, skater shoes (with a hole in the toe) and a cotton hoodie, all decked out with his handy wallet chain. His attire was questionable for a hike where it rains at least every second day, as was his backpack—with wheels—and his jar of pickles!

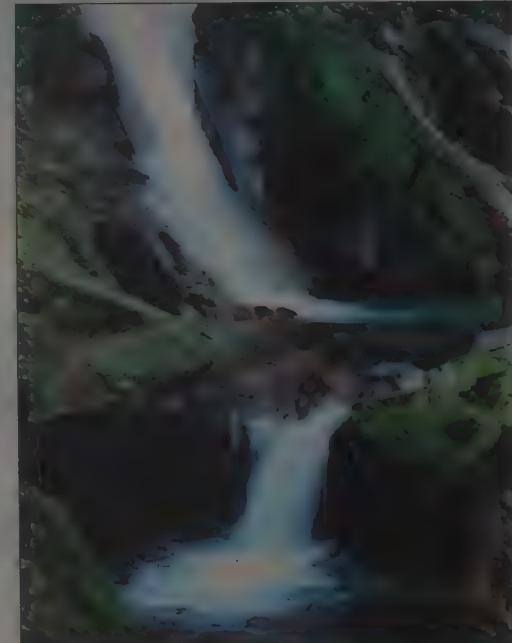
**TO BE FAIR, WE** made our share of rookie moves on this trip. Considering the Milford Track is so widely used and monitored, we anticipated a free and endless supply of toilet paper. Not so. Being less than total rookies, we brought 32 squares of the thin, white stuff (turns out we had extra). Or the fact that we forgot some groceries in the fridge causing us to fill pasta wraps with two-minute noodles and Vegemite instead of cheese and salami.

Our biggest rookie mistake, however, came on the Rees-Dart Track, where we lost a shoe, which resulted in one of us hiking over 100 km in fashionable brown Crocs (no blisters!). At least our spectacle wasn't witnessed by many. Thankfully, the Rees-Dart Track was virtually empty, and the few people we encountered carried packs, not luggage, shared candlelight conversation and were pickle-free. One guy had a suspiciously top-secret-looking rifle that would have been effective at shooting elu-

sive Canadian moose, let alone pesky possums. We also met two gruff fellows who slapped a cold, damp piece of raw meat into Dee's hand, which left us wondering: 1) who brings meat into the backcountry? 2) how fresh was this meat? and 3) What kind of meat is this? The answers were: hunters, really fresh and chamois (cute goat). Right, of course.

The final difference was the hit on

our pocket book. Hiking the Milford Track was more than twice as expensive as the Rees-Dart Track (\$180 and \$80, respectively), for both transportation and nightly fees. Based on our experiences, if we had to pick a favourite track, we'd choose the Rees-Dart because of the stunning alpine environment, fewer hiking crowds, bargain price and, oh yeah, fresh meat. ▶



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# From summer paradise to oil slick, and back

CHRISTINA NEIL / christina@vnewsworld.com

**O**n Aug 3, 2005, an eerie silence enveloped Wabamun Lake after about 712 500 litres of Bunker C oil and 88 000 litres of pole treatment oil spilled onto the ground from a CN train derailment. For the remainder of the summer, all that could be heard was the sound of large vacuum trucks, as all the birds had either left the lake or were covered in

oil. My cabin at Rich's Point had turned from a summer paradise into a stinky oil sieve.

Since I was born I've spent my summers at Wabamun Lake, and it has become a second home with many fond memories. I grew up there catching frogs and minnows and making sandcastles. I learned how to water ski and wakeboard there, and these are now my favourite sports. I get such

a rush from cutting across the boat wake while slaloming on my water ski and I love the challenge of trying to make a bigger spray every time.

In an instant this was taken away from me by CN. The most appalling part for many residents was CN's slow response to the spill. Unsatisfied with the company's lacklustre effort, they blocked the tracks and spurred CN into action. Since then, the Lake

found in the water column and sediments, but this is unrelated to the oil spill and probably due to the power plants around the lake. So, for the most part, Wabamun is going to return to normal in the long run.

**RETURNING TO THE LAKE** this summer brought back all the familiar feelings of just having a good time at the lake. The lake is back to normal and Wabamun is thriving as it develops its image as "Village on the Lake" with the CN money.

Once again I ripped through the water on my water ski and wakeboard. I managed to do a 180 and got a bit of air doing jumps on my wakeboard, but mostly I got a lot of water in my face from all the falling. After an intense couple hours of skiing I visited my favourite haunt in the village: The Waycup Café, where they serve some of the best carrot muffins and cheese scones, fresh from the oven.

I even managed to fix up the old fishing boat to try fishing in front of my place. I ended up catching a few jackfish that were as feisty as ever when I tried to pull the hook out of their mouths, and they didn't have any visual deformities.

I spent many lazy afternoons boating to the middle of the lake, where the water seems oil free, to swim. One day, I tried out my small sailboat, but decided to call it quits when I capsized coming into shore.

The only trace of the spill that I found was the oil I sometimes got between my toes when wading near the shoreline of my cottage. In the evenings, I settled into my usual routine of making campfires with the neighbours and eating more s'mores than my stomach could handle.

This year it seems like many people are enjoying Lake Wabamun. They appear to be more boats and seadoes on the lake than usual. Perhaps people are enjoying their settlement from CN. On the August long weekend Wabamun Lake was busier than ever, with many colourful sails dotting the lake. All in all, Wabamun Lake is back to normal and is once again a place where people can enjoy lake life. ■



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# 00780: seven reasons to keep it local at Live and Let Fringe

DAVID BERRY / [david@vneweekly.com](mailto:david@vneweekly.com)

The Fringe is, of course, all things to all people, but one of its most practical and important roles is as a proving ground for the Edmonton theatre scene. The list of actors, writers and directors who have made careers for themselves thanks to a breakout Fringe show could fill a book, never mind an arts weekly, and it's no stretch to say Edmonton's theatre community wouldn't be half of what it is today if it wasn't possible to drop your name into a hat and get yourself a prime spot in the summer's biggest festival.

With that in mind, *Vue* presents seven plays worth seeing if you're interested in doing your part for the Edmonton theatre scene. The only thing any of these plays have in common is that they're entirely written, directed and performed by pure Edmonton talent, whether it's an old hand returning for another hurrah or a first-timer learning the intricacies of midnight showings.

At the end of each of our recommendations, you'll also find theirs: consider it a reminder that no list like this is ever definitive, and half the fun is stumbling on the gem you never expected. There's a reason all the venues are close together, folks: take advantage.

## THE ACTING! HACKING! SCHMACKTING! REVUE

### STAGE 9 (WALTERDALE PLAYHOUSE)

Every regular Fringer knows that a night of Fringing is going to be a diverse experience, but not too many of the companies putting on shows are hoping to give you a little taste of everything without you ever having to see another show.

The folks with No Bones theatre, however, are hoping the third incarnation—though first Fringe appearance—of their hyperkinetic, frequently hilarious *Revue* can use bits of everything to make up one fairly awesome show.

"We like to think of it as theatre with ADD," explains Chris Schulz, one of the fresh-faced company's more recognizable faces and one of Edmonton's more charismatic young actors. "There's something new coming right away all the time, so if you don't like this one, you'll probably like the next one. And if you don't really share the sense of humour, at least you're not even going to get bored."

Made up of two short plays—Schulz's

## ARTS | VUE RECOMMENDS

own stolen-cake thriller *Cut to the Chase* and troupe mate Chris Gamble's roommate comedy *It Came From the Closet*—the *Revue* features two hosts, a talking cartoon stand-up comedian and musical interludes from Die Gretzky Die and the Fabulous 99s, and is indeed quite the menagerie of theatrical experiences. For Schulz and the rest of his ensemble, though, not pinning themselves down not only means more freedom, but a whole lot more fun.

"Both the plays are fairly silly, and probably not the kind of thing you could

actually make a whole show about," he says. "This way, we get to have that kind of silly fun, and when we get bored of that, do something else that's just as fun, if not maybe as, you know, ridiculous."

Schulz recommends: *Our Kind of Love is an Ugly Love, 'B' or Unless You Steal Her Pen!*

### GOD'S EYE

### STAGE 9 (WALTERDALE PLAYHOUSE)

Marty Chan returns to the Fringe—blame the lottery system for keeping him away—with this show about a child who comes to grips with his father's stroke by putting God on trial. Though it started as a children's play, Chan learned early on it might be a little over the head of a younger audience.

"By the end of one of the first full readings of the play at Concrete Theatre's



Sprouts festival, everyone in the audience

was crying," Chan explains. "The kids were bored to tears, but the parents were moved to them."

Who knows what it says about kids that they could be bored with this kind of existential crisis—as Chan explains, the topic of religion is an endlessly fascinating one, and he would have found it a worthwhile exploration even if it didn't end in *God's Eye*.

"As I was writing, I realized that the relationship of Norman talking to his comatose father was the same as the kind of relationship religious people have with God," says Chan, who insists he's not interested in getting on a soap box, but rather just exploring the idea. "You're constantly looking for some kind of response, but you almost never get one—there aren't too many flaming bushes—and you have to somehow learn to deal with that."

Chan recommends: *Madagascar, One*

### HOUSE OF SOD

### STAGE 4 (COSMOPOLITAN MUSIC SOCIETY)

For the most part, fiction tends to concern itself with some kind of escape: people more interesting than we are, places more thrilling, situations more important. But even though U of A playwright Bohdan Tarasenko's first professional play, *House of Sod*, is packed with the magic of Eastern European folklore, it's hardly escaping anything.

Set in a time and place that almost defines bleak, *Sod* follows the life of a semi-successful turn-of-the-century Ukrainian boy returning to his childhood soddie—the, uh, sod-built houses that the settlers lived in when they couldn't afford to find wood. It's not exactly Paris, but then Tarasenko hardly seems like the type who prefers gilt.

"There's something about the aesthetic that appeals to me," Tarasenko admits. "The idea of being stuck in this dirty little

into the ground, with dirty potato sacks around, and a fence made out of broken sticks and logs: it's rustic."

Working with a gaggle of some of the U of A's most interesting actors—includ-

alist that lead Panty Belinda Cornish thinks translates particularly well across time

"It works well for comedy, especially now, because it's basically anti-observa-



ing Rapid Fire theatre regulars/all-around talents Amy Shostak and Kirsten Rasmussen—Tarasenko is hoping to bring a kind of magical realism to the misery of life on the prairies in the early part of the century. Admittedly, though, it's been the despair that's come easier to Tarasenko, a fact he credits at least partially to his heritage. Ukrainians, as they themselves will tell you, have it rough

"I work in a senior's home, and every morning these people get together to talk about what's going wrong with them," Tarasenko explains. "Someones' hip is going, and someone's knee and someone's back. Their misery is really kind of what defines them; I think there's something particularly true about that when it comes to the Ukrainian experience: everything's always as bad as it could be."

Tarasenko recommends: *Effie's Revenge, Bitches*

### LOBSTER TELEPHONE

### BYOV C (HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH)

There's something utterly magnetic about Salvador Dalí. From the way he styled his moustache like he was trying to attract lightning to the rampant weirdness with which he infused his oeuvre, most people go through at least a few years with "The Persistence of Memory" on their wall.

For the sketch comedy show *Lobster Telephone*, though, Panties Productions was chiefly drawn to Dalí's absurd humour—an aspect of the Spanish surre-

realism that's the thing that would never possibly happen in the situation you're seeing," Cornish explains. "Something happens that's so far from what you'd expect it just kind of jerks the laugh right out of you, you can't really help yourself."

Audiences certainly haven't had much luck helping themselves, as the show has already won itself a Sterling for Outstanding New Work, and had successful showcases in Atlanta and LA. Though the Fringe version will be a slightly truncated one—time constraints, you know—Cornish is sure it will prove just as ridiculously hilarious as it has before, mostly because she still finds it to be that way.

"My favourite part of this show is a little interlude where I get to play a velociraptor," Cornish says about the show's non-sequel charms. "It's the dumbest thing I've ever done; it's completely retarded. The audience just sits there for a second and goes, 'What?' And then they laugh. It's excellent."

Cornish recommends: *Matt & Ben, Planes, Trans & Automobiles*

### POPPIN'

### STAGE 8 (WARSCONA THEATRE)

The Fringe, at least in name and mandate if not necessarily always in spirit, is about pushing boundaries. Sometimes, though, challenging your own limits can mean doing something a bit more tradi-

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# For Fringe 007, tickets worthy of Q

FRINGE OFFICIALS SAY IT WILL HELP THE ARTISTS, BUT WHAT WILL ONLINE TICKET SALES MEAN FOR FRINGE CULTURE?

EVA MARIE CLARKE / evamarie@vneweekly.com

**I**t's like your pet bunny is on the operating table having open heart surgery, and you have no choice but to sit in the waiting room wringing your hands," chuckles the rufous voice over the line. David Belke, a Fringe staple since the early 1990s, when he unleashed *The Maltese Bodkin* on Edmonton, is quietly diplomatic about the sweeping changes about to propel the beloved theatre festival irretrievably into the 21st century.

This year, there are no tickets available at the 24 Fringe venues dotting Old Strathcona like magical mushroom. Instead, expect to experience the annual theatrical feeding frenzy via online ticket sales, at a central box office in the Fringe Theatre Adventures Arts Barns or at six satellite kiosks scattered through the festival grounds. The move, says Belke, fundamentally changes the artist/audience interface—the very way the Fringe, which is as much a state of mind as it is a festival, is experienced.

There was always spontaneity, the kind of interactive festival where you come to the site to wander around and get tickets at the door," Belke explains. "You took your chances and didn't plan. This is a change of philosophy."

Change, says Belke, is fraught with a great deal of uncertainty, and while he is all for on-line availability, with Edmonton catching up to other test-mais across the country, in that regard he says the results of eradicating front-of-house sales will take a wee bit longer to assess.

"My advance tickets are selling well as in other years," he says. "But I don't sell out all my shows for an entire run [before the festival] now; people are buying the day of at the door. I won't know if I'm affected until opening night."

**SO, THERE IS UNCERTAINTY** over the bunny that says Julian Mayne—or M as the case may be—is only to be expected. He notes that each major change brought in by the festival has been met with a certain amount of resistance.

"BYOV's caused a lot of consternation. People said they'd destroy the festival," says Mayne. "It will take a couple of years for everyone to adapt to and embrace [online ticketing]. It will take a couple of years before we get to a point where everyone is comfortable."

Mayne points to improved customer service—no boards to decipher, no uncertainty about lining up for the last 25 per cent of available tickets to

the hot Guys in Disguise show. Buy your ticket anytime of the day or night, use Visa or Debit, if a show title strikes your fancy, rush over to the nearest kiosk. Sales, which have been available since Aug 2, are hot, he says, and Frequent Fringer passes are hotter than Pussy Galore faced with a supine secret agent.

From a purely practical standpoint,



the changes do make sense. Mayne points out that cash-room volunteers in the past have spent hours counting out "hundreds of thousands of dollars in small change," that each year Fringe Theatre Adventures prints more than 150,000 tickets, half of which then go through the shredder, and the allure of moneybag-laden volunteers passing through the grounds after midnight to certain nefarious individuals.

"There have been some concerns raised about security," admits Mayne.

He's quick to point out that under the new system, though, there's less hurry up and wait.

"This year you won't be standing in line when you could be watching theatre," he says. "People forget that this system has been in place since 1982. Computers as we know them weren't even thought of. Cash at the door was fine, there were far fewer people coming and it was easier."

**ONE COULD ARGUE** that the lines have always been part of the Fringe experience—forget the reviews, that's where the grassroots buzz begins, word of mouth, the best marketing tool an actor can have. It's also where performers can talk up their howlers in hand.

The line isn't gone", says Mayne. All the lineups to get into the theatre are still there, there will be line-ups at the box office and all of the satellite locations. Actors will still have plenty of opportunity to connect and talk to the patrons."

That's all well and good, counters Belke, adding that he strategically flies lineups for shows similar in tone to his; however, the objections raised by himself and numerous un-named others go a bit deeper than plastic and WiFi.

"It doesn't seem to feel that the change has been made in response to an expressed need by the audience," he explains. "There is a new team in charge of the festival this year, and before experiencing the Festival and associated problems, they're making this huge change. I believe people



would have been more positive if the organizers had a festival under the belt before this happened. This feels like a change based on policy and perception rather than direct experience."

Mayne argues that his enthusiasm comes from overhearing, and participating in, many beer tent conversations in 2006.

"People did stand in line to buy tickets, but just as many went home," he explains. "I heard a lot of, 'I'm just not going to stand in line for an hour on the chance I may or may not get a ticket. I'll stay here and drink beer.'"

That, he says, is why sales have

levelled out at 50 per cent.

"We have half a million tickets for on-site selling and are only selling 70,000 tickets," he says. "The new system offers more opportunities to buy tickets instead of less."

**ALL THE SAME, THERE** are unsubstantiated rumours of die-hard audience members who've decided to miss the festival this year. If those rumours are true, ex-Festival Director David Cheorros has little sympathy for the people who will miss out.

"So it's new, suck it up," he says sagaciously. "Don't let anything dis-

sade you from coming down. There is concern that people will be disoriented or that lineups may take longer to get through, but at this stage, it's all speculation and prediction."

"You can rest assured about one thing," he continues, "the artists and the Fringe will figure it out. People will be sitting down and watching plays. Nothing's going to get in the way of that."

Perhaps Belke best sums up the general feeling.

"It could be the best thing the Fringe has ever done, or it could be the worst thing," he shrugs. "We'll have to wait and see."

# What's next for the Middle East?

## NEW DYER BOOK TRIES TO CLEAN UP THE MESS THEY MADE

JAY SMITH / jay@vneweekly.com

"It's the last thing that we seem willing to do... just leave the Middle East alone," sighs Gwynne Dyer.

**The Mess They Made: The Middle East After Iraq** (McClelland & Stewart, \$21.99), the third volume of Dyer's trilogy on the Middle East, is a meandering meditation on the troubled region, with this argument for the end of interventionism as the unifying thread. The Newfoundland-born and London-based historian and journalist concentrates on contemporary geopolitics, touching briefly on the histories of Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Israel and, of course, the United States.

"There's all this discussion now about 'how do we fix it?' Sure, we made [this mess] but we can't 'fix it,'" Dyer emphasizes. "So we should just leave it alone, and get over this constant interventionism."

"In the case of Canada," adds the ex-pat Canadian, "we should just leave them alone in Afghanistan."

In the good-versus-evil worldview that seems to characterise every conversation on Iranian nuclear development, Dyer's book provides refreshing perspectives and fodder for debate.

Anybody who has tired of hearing Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's name being immediately followed by the statement "Holocaust denier" or "wiping Israel off the map" will take interest in Dyer's open-minded discussion.

Though Dyer by no means defends Ahmadinejad, he points out that the man is considered a hyper-religious nutcase at home, was nobody's first choice for president and likely will be succeeded by a more moderate leader before long anyway.

Dyer points out that those ubiquitous quotations about "wiping Israel from the map" are pulled out of their context and then mistranslated. An alternate translation reads "this regime occupying Israel must (vanish from) the pages of time." That he meant the regime, not the Jewish state, is supported by the context: Ahmadinejad goes on to speak of "other apparently invincible regimes that vanished from the pages of time [including] the Soviet Union, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and the Shah's regime in Iran itself."

Then, of course, Ahmadinejad shoots himself in the foot by including the more bellicose translation, in English, on his personal website.

**NONETHLESS, THIS IS** a captivating discussion for which there are few venues in North America.

"You know, I don't think of myself as a radical," says Dyer of his assumption that Iran is not run by "suicidal maniacs."

"But it's not just in the North American press, which is pretty biased, but in Europe, too," he argues. "People don't put themselves in Iranian shoes, assuming that they're not drooling



BOOKS

## NON-FICTION

mankind but rational beings, and ask 'Why are they doing these things?'

"These things," of course, refers to Iran's interest in developing nuclear weapons, which, Dyer points out, is the subject of a lot of hype and much less rational consideration. For Iran to launch a nuclear attack against Israel—the only necessary and apocalyptic consequence of enriching uranium if you believe the mainstream media—would mean that Israel would retaliate and do some wiping off the map of its own.

"Even if Iran has a nuclear program... everyone and their brother has a threshold capacity," adds Dyer, meaning that any country with any nuclear power-generating capacity, including Canada, can eventually turn that technology into bombs. Dyer asserts that it would take years for Iran to make nuclear weapons, and then only those imaginary suicidal maniacs would use them for anything but purposes of political deterrence.

"I mean, Israel is the strongest state in the Middle East, in every respect," Dyer explains. "It has a terrorist problem because it's occupying territories it doesn't own. And maybe it would have a terrorist problem even if it didn't... regardless, it's not a state on the brink of extinction. It's a strong state. It doesn't need the US to invade on its behalf."

**THE MESS THEY MADE HAS**, like any explicitly political work that challenges the simpler narratives of war and freedom, been subject to polemical attack. Moreover, since it fails to paint a rosy picture of Israel, it has been the subject of reviews Dyer simply calls "demolition jobs."

But while much of the criticism hurled at Dyer is ideologically based, one of the complaints made by some reviewers is worth considering.

review points out that, for details like Yasser Arafat's alleged early embrace of a two-state solution in Israel, or the claim that Hezbollah fighters traded commercial-quality drugs with Israeli soldiers for reconnaissance photos prior to last summer's war (this information enabled Hezbollah to evade Israeli attacks), providing sources would have increased the book's legitimacy.

Particularly given that the book's ambition is to challenge mainstream perceptions about orthodoxy-laden subjects like Israel and Palestine, or Iran's nuclear programme, citation may have serviced the sceptical.

In response, Dyer points out that neither of the books preceding *The Mess They Made* in the trilogy had either footnotes or indexes.

"I never put footnotes in any of the books of this sort I write," Dyer explains. "Sure, for academic tomes I do, but... they just chase people away. Besides, it takes too long. I started writing this book at the beginning of February. We're not going to take three to four weeks to index it! Read the damn book, don't look through the index [just] to find your name."

"If you have no other problems in the book except for its lack of footnotes," he adds, "I think I did pretty well."

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tional.

At least, that would seem to be the case for Clarice Eckford and Shannon Blanchet's Pony Productions. The previously named production company became renowned for its ensemble-written productions, most notably 2003's *Change Room*, which earned 12 different playwrights a Sterling Award for Outstanding Fringe New Work. For this year's show, though, the duo decided to stick with just one writer, but picked a good one. Chris Craddock, the man behind Edmonton theatrical gems from *Summer of My Amazing Luck* to *Faithless to Bash'd*, wrote the play specifically for the pair—something that Blanchet admits, initially took some getting used to.

"I think immediately after reading the script, I wanted to play Clarice's part and she wanted to play my part," Blanchet explains with a matter-of-fact laugh. "But we realized pretty quickly that Chris had made us each our characters for a reason



I'm not sure if that's good or bad, because I kind of do some dumb things in this play, but at least we have fun with it."

Blanchet admits she can see why. "You know, I can't even count how many friendships I've developed over those

things, so I probably shouldn't talk, but it's crazy how public some people make their lives," she says. "It's not like we're saying this is the downfall of society or anything—it's a pretty fun time at the Fringe—but I don't really think [my character] is as far off as she maybe should be."

**Blanchet recommends:** *Die Roten Punkte*, *Ponkete, Something Red*

#### THE GRID

#### BY DIA V (SCENE STUDIOS)

Putting on an Improv show at the Fringe is a fair bit tougher than it would first appear. Oh, sure, you don't have to worry quite as much about getting a script done, or cue-to-cueing your way through arduous tech sessions, but what you trade in pre-show ease you get back multi-fold in the stress of having to be consistently fresh, clever and funny night in and night out. And even if you can handle that, you've still got to battle the perceptions people have when they hear the word "improv."

"A lot of people seem to have this hang-up about it, and you just can't win

ride of zaniness and incredible improv."

"Actually, wait, don't put that," he adds, showing off his talent for thinking on his feet. "Scratch is way better than any show that would actually describe itself like that."

Gillespie recommends: *Die Roten Punkte*, *Cody Rivers Presents: Flammable People*

#### TRUE GRID

#### STAGE 7 (TELEPHONE MUSEUM)

For whatever reason, arts and sports have always had a somewhat tenuous relationship. Perhaps it's just the fact all the creative types are paranoid their grant money is one vote away from buying the cornerstone of a new arena, but it's rare to find a playwright turning her attention to the land of all star athletes and fan heartbreak.

Enter Linda Wood Edwards: fresh off the runaway success of her playwriting debut, *Spring Alibi*, the sprightly little charmer that got her a Sterling nod and a trip to Washington, DC for a successful Fringe run down there, Edwards is coming back to a subject that's incredibly close to her heart, which incidentally pumps blood in green and gold.

"I was born into the CFL—my father played for the Roughriders in the 1930s, and my mother was a die-hard Stamps fan. They didn't tell me which team to pick, but it was fairly obvious I had to have one," explains Edwards with an audible smile. "I really wanted this play to honour the fans, the people who display this intense love of the game year after year."

*True Grid* follows the football-watching lives

of a group of Eskimo superfans as everything they seem to know starts crumbling down around them. Not only are their beloved 'Smos hitting the tank—you can thank the team's terrible '06 season for that plot point!—there's a woman in their midst upsetting the precious dynamic.

For Edwards, the play itself is providing its own stressors: not only does she have to worry about doing right by Eskimo fans, she's got to live up to the reputation she's built for herself after only one play—no small bar to clear!

"You know, I wasn't even thinking about it until everybody started bringing it up," she says with a wry laugh. "Now I'm a bit more nervous: I want to be universally loved, just like everyone else."

Edwards recommends: *Poster of the Cosmos*, *Water*

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JOSÉF BRAUN

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Like everybody else, I came to *On the Road* in my teens. With regards to the wildly diverse group of writers who became—somewhat arbitrarily—collectively known as the Beats, I was a little more drawn to the baroque, fecund, unfurling psychic landscapes of William S. Burroughs than the satori-seeking wistfulness of Jack Kerouac, but *On the Road* was nonetheless more than just de rigueur reading. It was a sort of literal map, a call to all wanderlustful dreamers, a call toward a path of self-discovery through transience and transgression that instilled a longing so powerful as to be physically painful. I guess that sounds overwrought, but, you know, that's *On the Road*—heart-on-the-sleeve sentimental. It aches for moments that every moment slip away, for the brevity of youth and endings. It's a book about learning to say goodbye.

See, as far back as I can recall, I've always cherished that feeling you get when you wake up in a place you don't recognize, and in *On the Road* I'd discovered a deeply seductive articulation of this very feeling: "I woke up as the sun was reddening, and that was the one distinct time of my life, the strangest moment of all, when I didn't know who I was—I was far away from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I'd never seen, hearing the hiss of steam outside, and the creak of the old wood of the hotel, and footsteps upstairs, and all the sad sounds, and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and really didn't know who I was for about 15 seconds."

Fuelled by jazz and Benzedrine and the encouragement of a genuinely unique set of peers, Kerouac arrived at a radiant new ramshackle lyricism when he wrote the rough draft of *On the Road* on his long scroll back in 1951. The sometimes transcendental rambling was refined, censored (especially the overtly queer parts) and given a more readable shape for the published novel that finally exploded upon the international literary scene exactly 50 years ago this September, immediately turning Kerouac into a most reluctant "voice of a generation."

To mark this anniversary, I returned to *On the Road* for the first time since my teens. Interestingly, rather than suffer that particular embarrassment that can accompany re-familiarity with one's youthful loves, I found that a little extra life experience made my second reading of *On the Road* far richer. In our recent interview, filmmaker Charles Burnett said that he felt the blues was music you had to grow up to understand. I felt the same way re-reading the story of "shambling" Sal Paradise—Kerouac's stand-in—and his travels across the US, alternately delighting and despairing over



sunrises, pie, coffee, booze, girls, work, weather, music, hi-jinx, unexpected connections, American talk and—perhaps unconsciously—those shifting points we hit early in life, stinging with betrayal, that forever hardened us just a little.

What I also realized was that, contrary to the belief of my teens, Kerouac's par-

ticular vision of the road was also something essentially unattainable—not just unattainable to me 15 years ago, but probably even unattainable to those who read *On the Road* when it was published, which was ten years after the events recorded in the novel actually occurred.

Kerouac's vision was most certainly a

thing of the past by the 1970s, when Bruce Springsteen's "Thunder Road," so rife with wearying hopes, or Tom Waits' rollicking homage "Jack & Neal/California Here I Come," shot through with a nostalgia for a lost age, cemented the feeling that the roads were gradually closing, or at least getting converted into superhighways where virtually no one would pick you up, the adjacent diners were jacking up the prices, even unskilled labour work was mired in red tape and there's no place left for a hobo to stay. (Kerouac's vision also predicted the era when casual sex could kill you.) By the time I read it, the 1940s of *On the Road* might as well have been the Old West.

However, the question of this novel's relevance to a new generation shouldn't be dismissed. In fact, the raw spirit of Kerouac's vision is probably needed now more than ever, when youth culture seems to be defining itself primarily through its consumerism (which, oddly enough, sounds not altogether unlike the cultural climate of the 1950s). I hope there are other, newer novels that speak somehow to the wanderers among today's young people, something that reflects current conditions. But as long as there is a great wide world to reach out and touch and get lost in, *On the Road* should hold a firm place on our shelves. ▶

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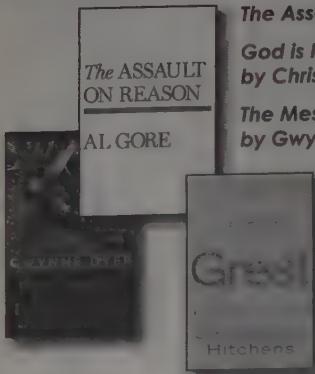


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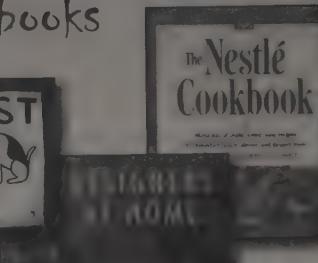
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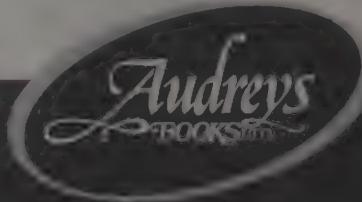
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# I see you've played film-y fest-y before AUSSIE FILMS REVEAL THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LAND DOWN UNDER

DIAN GIBSON / brian@vneweekly.com

forget kangaroos, koalas, the Opera House and the 2000 Olympics. The *Australian Film Festival*, a series of features paired with shorts that is screening this weekend, offers some new twists and turns in its survey of the continentized country: lawn bowling in Melbourne (*Crackerjack*), a Sicilian girl struggling in Sydney (*Looking For Handi*), fiery family reunions in Victoria and Northern Australia (*Hotel Sorrento, Radiance*).

A national showcase can sometimes pit some stereotype-promoting movies or cheery celluloid tourism brochures on display. Instead, *Yolngu Boy* (2001) is startlingly raw and real look at the modern day plight of the people who

predate Australia, living there long before explorers and exiled criminals landed. Lorpup (John Sebastian Pilakui) is a Yolngu teenager in Arnhem Land. He grew up with Botj (Sean Mununggurr) and Milika (Nathan Daniels), but as the film blurs from vision to memory to the present, it's clear their idyllic childhood days are long gone. Botj—whose father burned the house down while drunk—has been in jail and just got out, while Milika swaggers with the chance of making it in Australian Rules Football—everyone thinks he can be a star but "the problem was, Milika knew it too," Lorpup explains.

In your-face, quickly jagging camera follows the boys as they careen around, often barely avoiding trouble. Lorpup decides to help Botj,

**DOWN UNDER**  
FRI, AUG 17 - SUN, AUG 19  
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CRACKERJACK, LOOKING FOR ALVERANDI, RADIAN-  
CE, ANTANA, THE DASH,  
HOTEL SORRENTO, VARIOUS SHORTS  
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who's gone back to sniffing gas, by leading the three of them deep into the country, following their people's songlines and relying on the hunting traditions and stories they learned as boys.

The young leads' performances are remarkably strong, particularly Mununggurr's incendiary turn as Botj. His fierce glower and frenzied, directionless rage, always ready to burst, epitomizes a male Aboriginal culture



struggling with abuse and alcoholism.

The main reason for these boys' and their people's struggle with modernity is, of course, that it was so brutally and callously thrust on them

in the first place by white settlers. It's fitting that the main city nearby is Darwin; imagine being evicted from your

HOMEISLAND BY DAVID RUMSFELD

## Moore & Me: Doc takes a muddled look at America's muckraker

The documentary filmmaker Michael Moore has more than a few insufferable traits. He is manipulative, smug, and self-righteous. He has no interest in complexity. And he mocks the weak as well as the powerful." So began a recent *New Yorker* piece—which then went on to praise Moore's latest, *Sicko*, as a "revelation" that confronts Americans with the sickness of their healthcare system.

Moore is one of the most recognizable filmmakers in the world, but few inspire more polarized debate. He has his own mini-industry of watchdogs ([moorewatch.com](http://moorewatch.com)), critics (Jesse Lerner, author of *Forget My Own Skin*, or Michael Wilson, director of *Michael Moore Hates America*) and outright attackers snapping at his heels. But in *Manufacturing Dissent*: *Uncovering Michael Moore*, Canadians Debbie Melnyk and Rick Caine ask if, by putting a somewhat disingenuous persona into his films, Moore has muddled the man, the medium and the message?

The doc (largely funded by City TV/Chum)

begins as a pseudo-fan's journey. Melnyk says she'd like to meet the man who

seemed so forthright in his Oscar acceptance speech for *Bowling For Columbine*. Her naïveté seems a little put-on, as if to make this doc's discoveries about Moore all the more remarkable. Melnyk adopts a nice-nice persona around Moore, an ironic pose considering the film's criticism of Moore as a persona who's different in public than in private (aren't we all?).

Moore's "aw shucks," shuffling John Q Public, or his constant refrain here of "I love Canadians," is easy to see through and dismiss. *Manufacturing Dissent* rarely acknowledges the basic transparency of Moore's films: the obviousness of their editing, the clear sarcastic tone of the voiceovers and the basic, straightforward arguments they make. Melnyk fails to point out others' hypocrisy concerning Moore: isn't that Donahue, who grilled Moore about *Roger & Me*, introducing him at a 2000 Nader rally? And there's crank-nut Christopher Hitchens, who takes a shot at Moore in the film, chiding him at the 2002 Telluride festival.

MOORE'S POLITICS DO seem too celebratory

to populist, too simplistic, and reveal the dearth of complex American left-wing criticism. He seems to want us versus them, pathetically bailing on third alternative Nader in 2000. When the *Roger & Me* quester (and, more forcibly, his sister and security team) keeps Melnyk and Caine away on his 2004 *Slacker Uprising* tour, it smacks of someone caught up in self-conscious celebrity.

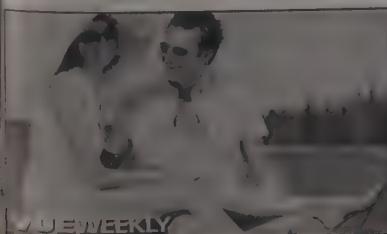
Melnyk's interviews with students during the tour are pointless, and *Manufacturing Dissent* could be cut by at least half-an-hour. It's Moore's films, and the Moore in those films, that really matter, and only when *Manufacturing Dissent* takes on the work does it land its hardest blows.

*Roger & Me* played fast and loose with the chronology of certain events and Moore foregrounded his individual quest, suggesting apathy in Flint about the GM layoffs when in fact many union meetings and protests were organized. The director of a play about Moore apparently discovered that the incident of the stolen Ninth-line van in *Roger & Me* was entirely made up by Moore for the film, while Pre-

miere magazine noted back in 1990 that Moore actually did meet Roger Smith twice. The combative mindset that Moore shows at one stop on the 2004 tour, nastily mocking Republicans as they leave the auditorium, hit its low point in his taunting of a foggy Charlton Heston with the picture of a little gunshot victim in *Bowling For Columbine*. Moore has set himself up (with some evangelical fervor of his own) as the Anti-Bush, playing into his country's red vs blue, two-man-show down political mindset.

The disc's best special feature is a ten-minute "Documentary Discussion." Renowned documentarian Albert Maysles mixes the slanderous and insightful, calling Moore "a son of a bitch" and "lousy person" because he tries to "do people in," is "out to prove what he already knew before" and doesn't offer counterpoints. Canadian doc-maker Allan King feels Moore is "mean-spirited." But both men work in the direct cinema tradition (Maysles still believes in knowledge "that is unprejudiced"), while Moore is working in the director-reveals-presence cinema verité tradition. But is Moore simply too much of an entertaining narcissist for the genre? Film critic Harlan Jacobson extols a moment in a Marcel Ophuls doc where the director reveals himself to be outraged—but is Moore worse because he's outraged from the start?

These critics seem to assume the viewer isn't considering some of these crucial questions when watching a Moore movie. But many who watch a Moore documentary, precisely because he puts his ambling, poly-self out there and calls attention to himself as editor and camera manipulator, are likely well aware that the film is more of a message-driven story than a laying-out of the facts. Moore's fabrications do taint his work, as well as the man's public persona, and it's easy to rally an attack and ignore his message. But whether they're artful propaganda or documentary art, the intent of Moore's films is to spark a debate about issues too long ignored, and they've always done that. In its sputtering way, *Manufacturing Dissent*, too, should spark discussion about the film world's biggest firebrand. ▶



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## GALLERIES/MUSEUMS

**AGNES BUGERA GALLERY** 1210 Jasper Ave  
(492-2854) • Open Tue-Sat 10am-5pm • **NEW WORKS:** Artworks by gallery artists: Ernestine Tehedi, Karen Yurkovich, Greg Edmonson, Gordon Harper, Danièle Lemieux, Ken Wallace, Scott Pleasant, and Mikkel Tem Grotz. Continues through August.

**ALBERTA CRAFT COUNCIL GALLERY** 10186-106 St (489-6611) • Open Mon-Sat 10am-5pm (closed all hols) • **Feature Gallery: MAKING ALBERTA HOME**: Home furnishings and accessories; until Oct. 6 • **Discovery Gallery: TO CHINA WITH LOVE**: New sculptural ceramic works by Diane Sullivan. Until Sept. 8

**ART GALLERY OF ALBERTA** Enterprise Square, 100, 10230 Jasper Ave • Open Mon-Fri 10:30am-5pm; the 10:30am-8pm (4-8pm free admission); Sat-Sun 11am-5pm • **Drop-In Tours:** Sat and Sun (12:30, 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30pm) • **CAPITAL MODERN: EDMONTON ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN, 1940-1969**; until Aug. 26 • Capital Modern silent auction; bid on 50-plus photographs by renowned photographer Jim Dow; Aug. 25, 7pm • **THE 2007 ALBERTA BIENNIAL OF CONTEMPORARY ART-LIVING UTOPIA AND DISASTER:** Works by 22 artists; until Sept. 9

**ART MODE GALLERY** 12220 Jasper Ave (453-1556) • **NOBILITY AND POWER:** Paintings by Jennifer Mack • Until Aug. 17

**AXIS CAFÉ** 10349 Jasper Ave (990-0031) • Acrylic paintings by Rodrigo Lopez • Until Sept. 31

**BIRMINGHAM ZIGLA KINNEY ARCHITECTURE** 10434-122 St (489-9700) • Open Mon-Fri 8am-5pm • **Photographs by Mark Morris** • Until Sept. 7

**CENTRE D'ARTS VISUELS DE L'ALBAITÀ** 9103-95 Ave • Open Mon-Fri 10am-8pm; Sat 10am-5pm • **SUMMER PARADE** artwork by Agathe St. Pierre, Emma Cayer, Marie France Leroyer, Jody Swanson's pottery; Val Solash's monotypes • Aug. 17-Sept. 5 • Opening reception Aug. 17 (7:30pm)

**CONCORDIA LIBRARY GALLERY** 7128 12th Ave (479-9338) • Open Mon-Fri 8am-5pm • Black-and-white photos of Alberta by Leon Srembski • Until Sept. 7

**EXTENSION CENTRE GALLERY** 2nd Fl, University Extension Centre, 8303-112 St (492-0168) • Open Mon-Thu 8:30am-8pm; Fri 8:30am-4:30pm; Sat 9am-noon •

**FAB GALLERY** Rm 1-1 Fine Arts Bldg, 112 St, 69 Ave (492-2081) • Open Tue-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat 2-5pm • **AGAINST THE GRAIN**: Kelly Johnson, master of fine arts in sculpture; until Aug. 18 • **Chasing Form:** Cesár Alvarez's final visual presentation for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture. Outdoors exhibition; U of A Campus, South of Rutherford Library, 89 Ave, 112 St; extended to Sept. 15

**FRINGE GALLERY** 10516 Whyte Ave (432-0240) • **ART WALK 2007** Mixed media • Through August

**GALLERY AT MILNER-STANLEY A. MILNER LIBRARY** Main Fl, Sir Winston Churchill Sq (496-7030) • Open Mon-Fri 8am-5pm; Sat 8am-6pm; Sun 1-5pm • **THE SHOWGIRLS:** Fibre artworks by Dawna De Haynish, Mango Fiddles, Cathy Tamm, and Sharon Willis Rubulab; Aug. 30 • **Edmonton Room:** Open Mon-Fri • **LUCENT:** A survey of contemporary Canadian glass; curators: Tina Oldknow, Norman Faulkner, Caren Pilon; Works Festival exhibit held over until Aug. 24

**HARCOURT HOUSE** 10215-112 St (416-4180) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm; Sat 12-4pm • **Milne Gallery:** H. Toni Hafkenscheid's photographs resemble artificial scenes from model train sets or an idealized view blurring reality and fiction, until Aug. 25 • **Frost Room: ACTS OF DEVOTION:** Art by Tammy Salz; until Aug. 25

**JEFF ALLEN GALLERY** Strathcona Place, 10831 University Ave (433-5282) • Open Mon-Fri 9am-4pm • **THROUGH MY EYES:** Edmonton artist Josie Stechuk's renditions of Alberta scenery, folklore, flora and architecture; until Aug. 30

**JOHNSON GALLERY (NORTH)** 1817-80 St (479-8242) • Open Tue-Fri 9:30am-5:30pm; Sat 9:30am-4pm • **Serialists** by Norval Morrisseau and Jackson Beardy; prints by Tomi paintings by Cindy Revell; wall art by Raymond Chow • (SOUTH) 7711-105 St (485-5171) • Open Mon-Fri 8am-5pm; Sat 10am-5pm • **Art by Shirley Thomas:** Edythe Markstad Buschan, Serigraphs on Community buildings by George Webber; pottery by Jim Speirs

**LATTITUDE 53 GALLERY** 10248-106 St (423-5333) • **EDMONTON CRASH PAD:** Various artists in timelapse show • Until Sept. 8

**McMILLAN GALLERY** 111 of A Hospital, 8440-112 St (407-7152) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-8pm; Sat-Sun 1-8pm • **ALL DAY/EVERYDAY:** Dispelling the everyday gesture of the human experience; Until Oct. 14 • **FOUR OUTSIDE VIEWS:** Landscape paintings by Pam Wilman; Adeline Rockett, Sophia Podhyka - Shaw, Diana Miller; Until Sept. 30

**MCPAS** 541-51 St, Stony Plain (963-2777) • Open Mon-Sat 10am-4pm; Sun (8am-5:30pm) • **Sculptures by Roy Mills:** Until Aug. 25 • **The Dining Room Gallery:** Elsie Holt paintings; Until Sept. 20

**MUSÉE HÉRITAGE MUSEUM** 5 St. Anne St., St. Albert (459-1528) • Open: Mon-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 1-5pm • **SISTER EXHIBITS:** Two stories of the woman's religious order that helped shape Western Canada • Until Sept. 9

**MUTTART CONSERVATORY** 9826-98A St • **ELEMENTAL: WATER/EARTH/FIRE/AIR:** Art by members of the Sculptors' Association of Alberta • Until Sept. 30

**NUIMA INSTITUTE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS** 9704-111 Ave (474-7611) • Summer Art Cafes: local artists in solo and group exhibits to create a cafe experience in the Stollery Gallery • Through August.

**PICTURE THIS GALLERY** 958 Ordbe Rd, Sherwood Park (467-3028) • Soapstone sculptures by Vieve Thorant, encapsulated watercolors by Thomas Love, acrylic paintings by Yuan Cheng Bi, landscapes by Peter Jacobs, seascapes by Maxwell Nimeck, acrylic painting by Kerri Burnett, small wildlife watercolors by Wes and Rachelle Siegrist • Until Aug. 31

**PORTAL GALLERY** 9414-91 St (702-7522) • Open Tue-Fri 2-8pm; Sat 12-7pm • Vivian Bennett Exhibition of new works; Until Sept. 11

**PROFILES PUBLIC ART GALLERY** 19 Perron Street, St. Albert (460-4310) • Open Tue-Sat (10am-5pm), Thu (10am-8pm) • **ROOTS: Shern Chaba:** Brenda Kim Christiansen, Erin Schwab; Until Sept. 1

**PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES** 8555 Roger Rd (477-1750) • Open Mon-Sat 9am-4:30pm; Wed 4:30-9pm • **IMMORTAL: NATURE'S AGELESS HERB:** NY: THE BOTANICAL LANTERN SLIDES OF WILLIAM COPELAND MCCALLA: Hand-coloured glass lantern slides of flowers and plants by William Copeland, 1914-1938 • Until Sept. 1

**ROTAL ALBERTA MUSEUM** 12845-102 Ave (453-9100) • Open daily 9am-5pm • **SMALL WONDER: THE MINISCULE MAGNIFIED:** View images of the micro world of mosses, insects, snail shells and seeds; until Sept. 3 • **STORIES FROM THE SOUTHEKS COLLECTION: A 150-YEAR JOURNEY:** First Nations and Métis artifacts (1854-60), until Sept. 3 • **COOL AND COLLECTED:** See the unseen from the Museum's collections; until Sept. 3 • **GALEN ROWELL-A RETROSPECTIVE:** Landscape photographs; until Sept. 3

**SCOTT GALLERY** 10411-124 St (488-3619) • Open Tue-Sat 10am-5pm • Phyllis Andersson's still life and landscapes, and David Mitchell's jade sculptures. Also featuring gelatin silver prints by Tom Willcock and still-life paintings by Jacqueline Stehelin; Until Aug. 21

**SNAP GALLERY** 10309-97 St (423-1892) • Open Tue-Sat 12-5pm • **Main Gallery: RING AROUND THE ROSE:** Marilee Salvador. Print world that deal with autobiography, feminist ideals and abstraction; until Sept. 3 • **Studio Gallery: IN THE GATHERING LIGHT:** Michelle LaVoie. In the Gathering Light is a series of images that use technology to talk about technology and how it acts as a filter for our perceptions; until Sept. 1

**SPRUCE GROVE ART GALLERY** 35-56 Ave (962-0664) • Open Mon-Thu 10am-8pm; Fri-Sat 10am-5pm • **WOOD TURNINGS:** By Ken Wiancko • Until Aug. 25

**THE STRATHCONA COUNTY MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES** 913 8th St, Sherwood Park (467-8189) • Open Mon-Fri 10am-4pm; weekends by appointment/pre-booked tour • **SPORTS FROM THE PAST:** Featuring sports equipment, photographs and collectibles from the early 1900s to

the late 1980s; until September; \$3

**THE STUDIO GALLERY** 111 Vernon Street, St Albert (469-5983) • Open: Thu 12-8pm, Fri 10am-6pm, Sat 10am-5pm or by appointment • **THE WORLD AROUND ME:** George Kubicek's sketches until Sept. 1

**TELUS WORLD OF SCIENCE** 1121-124 St (452-9100) • **LOST WORLDS:** Exhibition from dinosour to ancient civilizations • Until Sept. 3

**VAAA GALLERY** 3rd Fl, Harcourt House, 10215 112 St (421-1731) • **ALBERTA WIDE 2007:** Sixth annual exhibition from Alberta Community Arts Club Association members provincewide • Until Aug. 28

**WEST END GALLERY** 12308 Jasper Ave (488-4892) • Open: Tue-Sat 10am-5pm • **CANADIAN LANDSCAPES:** Scott MacLeod, Guy Roy, Bill Webb, Robert Genn • Until Sept. 20

## LITERACY

**BLUE CHAIR CAFÉ** 9624-76 Ave (469-0755) • Story Slam: An opportunity for writers to share their work, explore their talents and show off • third Wed each month • \$5 (donation)

**3 BANANAS CAFÉ** Sir Winston Churchill Square • **HOW-WORLD ON WORDS:** We all have something to say, amateurs and professionals alike. Let's creative writing process guide you into self-discovery • Meetings bi-monthly, Sun (4-6pm) for info e-mail [feelgoodbeawellin2007@gmail.com](mailto:feelgoodbeawellin2007@gmail.com)

## LIVE COMEDY

**THE COMEDY STRIP** 3414 Gateway Boulevard (469-4999) • Thu (8:30pm), \$11, Fri (8:30pm), Sat 8pm (\$10), \$20 • Every Wed (8:30pm): Wacky Wednesday, \$5, Tom Liske Aug. 23-25

**THE COMIC STRIP** 1646 Bourne St, WEM, 889-170 St (463-5599) • Open nightly 8pm, Fri 8pm and 10:30pm, Sat 8pm and 10:30pm, Sun 8pm • **Hit or Miss Mondays:** Tues alternative comedy night, Wed local talent • Lou Eisen, Sean Thompson, and Mike Patterson; until Aug. 19 • **Billy Gandy, Shawn Gramick, and Lou Eisen:** Aug. 22-26

**CROWN AND ANCHOR PUB** 1527 Castledown Rd (472-7699) • Ha-De-Ha comedy with host Kathleen McCue featuring Andrew Irwanyk and Thu (9pm) • No cover

**NEW CITY LUXURY LOUNGE** • Comedy Extravaganza: hosted by Kathleen McCue, first Thu each month; no minors; 8:30pm (door), 9pm (show) • \$10

**RIVERSIDE BAR AND GRILL** 367 St. Albert Rd (460-1122) • Wednesday Night Live: Open stage every Wed for comedy, and music hosted by Barbara May and the Tumbling Dice (8-10pm) • No cover

**YUK YUK'S KOMEDY KABARET** Londonerry Mall (481-9587) • Open Wed 8pm, Fri-Sat 8pm and 10:30pm • Sun: Industry Night, \$10 • Wed Crash and Burn featuring Kevin McGrath • Kevin McGrath, Kathleen McCue, Dawn Dumont and Trent McCallan Aug. 16-18

## THEATRE

**SMILE TONIGHT, DANCE TO MAKE YOU SMILE** Mayfield Dinner Theatre, Mayfield Inn, 16615-109 Ave (483-4051) • Compiled and written by Jim Breuer, with parodies of well known Broadway hits to original comedy songs, this show pokes fun at all aspects of our lives • Until Aug. 26

**WORLD INTERNATIONAL FRINGE THEATRE FESTIVAL** Various venues, Old Strathcona www.fringetheatreadventures.ca (448-9000) • The continent's largest fringe festival will feature more than 130 unjugged and uncensored shows from around the world, an entertaining street scene, a plethora of food vendors, and craftwork by local artisans • Vibe Tribe Productions MacBare Circus www.vibembe.ca; fire breather, poi and hula hoopers, snake charmers, gymnasts, live musicians and more • Aug. 16-26

Thoroughly Modern Millie La Cite Françoise 8627 91 St • The story of a young girl who comes to New York City in search of a new life for herself. This musical takes place right at the height of the Jazz Age, when women were entering the workforce and rewriting the rules of love and social behavior • Until Aug. 18, 8pm (Aug. 18, 2pm) • Tickets \$10 general, \$5 children 12 and under at the door on the Square.

**29 Jubilation** Dinner Theatre, 6862-170 St, WEM (484-2944) • Special Agent Jack Bauer always gets his man, or this in case, woman in this comedy. Set on the new "Skyline Luxury Air Cruiser" Jack must deliver his beautiful, dangerous prisoner, but first must survive each 29-minute flight with a few surprise passengers! • Aug. 17-Oct. 28

# Megatunes

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FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUG 16, 2007

1. The Traveling Wilburys – Collection (rhino)
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3. Various – The Gift: A Tribute To Ian Tyson (stony plain)
4. Interpol – Our Love To Admire (capitol)
5. Tegan & Sara – The Con (maple)
6. St. Vincent – Marry Me (beggars)
7. Yeah Yeah Yeahs – Is Is (dress up)
8. Joan Armatrading – Into The Blues (429)
9. Spoon – GaGaGaGaGa (merge)
10. The White Stripes – Icky Thump (warner)
11. Wilco – Sky Blue Sky (onesuch)
12. Peter Case – Let Us Now Praise Sleepy John (yep roc)
13. Wumpscut – Body Census (metropolis)
14. Feist – The Reminder (arts & crafts)
15. Municipal Waste – The Art Of Parting (earache)
16. Common – Finding Forever (geffen)
17. Emily Haines & The Soft Skeletons – What Is Free To A Good Home (fast gang)
18. Nile – Ittihafallic (nuclear blast)
19. Ryan Adams – Easy Tiger (lost highway)
20. Mavis Staples – We'll Never Turn Back (antit)
21. The National – Boxer (4ad)
22. Carolyn Mark – Nothing Is Free (minit)
23. Ween – The Friends EP (chocodog)
24. Against Me! – New Wave (reprise)
25. Bjork – Volta (atlantic)
26. Rufus Wainwright – Release The Stars (geffen)
27. Amy Winehouse – Back To Black (universal)
28. Mark Olson – The Salvation Blues (universal)
29. Arcade Fire – Neon Bible (merge)
30. Lucinda Williams – West (lost highway)

## DALA WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE

With their new album 'Who Do You Think You Are', Dala reveal the moody maturity that has come to define their unique brand of acoustic pop. One of the top sellers at every festival they've played, Dala and their fun and energetic stage presence have truly become a force to be reckoned with. In December of 2006, their album 'Angels and Thieves' was nominated for three Canadian Folk Music Awards; no small feat for a debut album. In March of this year, the girls toured extensively with Tom Cochrane, winning over audiences across the country and they'll be out on the road again soon. They'll be opening for Matthew Good on his acoustic tour this fall.

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## Who's the producer making even the bad *Super*? Judd!

DAVID BERRY / david@vnewswEEKLY.com

Judd Apatow is fairly rapidly becoming one of the most gifted speakers of the vox populi. Unlike most creative types who share his acuity and talent, Apatow has never turned to the tritiae to share his vision: from sketch shows to coming-of-age dramas to gross-out comedies, Apatow has essentially spent a career proving that mass appeal doesn't have to mean mediocre, crossing off one cultural touchstone after the other while rarely ever sinking to their usual level.

What's really unique about him, though, is that he's not exactly slumming it, either. With the exception of the still-astounding *Freaks and Geeks*—which is increasingly starting to look like it owed its light-hearted bleakness far more to Paul Feig than Apatow—Apatow's sensibilities are unmistakable mainstream. Everything always works out for his protagonists, charming everymen whose good nature generally keeps them a half-step behind an often bewildering, occasionally morally questionable society. Shy smiles and good intentions are all one really needs to get by in Apatow's world, although a talent for creative swearing doesn't hurt.

The latest proof of Apatow's talent with things we've all seen before comes in *Superbad*, an Apatow-glossed take on the teen sex comedy. Helmed by frequent *Undeclared* director Greg Mottola, the film stars the funniest teen actor in the world, Michael Cera, and a surprisingly talented Jonah Hill (this was the shrieking fat kid from *Accepted*?). As Evan and Seth (named after co-writers and Apatow faves Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg), two soon-to-be high school grads trying to celebrate their last days together the only way teenage boys in movies really can: beer and (attempted) sex.

**APATOW IS ONLY** credited as a producer, but some of his more endearing trademarks are interspersed throughout the film. Not the least among those is the ramshackle, regularly profane banter between Cera and Hill. To call it crude would be to miss the point somewhat: *Superbad* is not at all self-conscious about throwing

COMEDY

OPENS FRIDAY  
**SUPERBAD**

DIRECTED BY GREG MOTTOLA

WRITTEN BY SETH ROGEN, EVAN GOLDBERG

STARRING MICHAEL CERA, JONAH HILL, CHRISTOPHER MINTZ-PLASSE, SETH ROGEN,  
BILL HADER

around its "fucks" or "vags" (pronounced like the "Taj" in *Taj Mahal*), and instead its conversations sprinkle them, weave them and lean on them intermittently, using them with the kind of prosaic necessity that, well, teenage boys tend to.

This is done so skillfully they even manage to get away with a couple "fags"—they are indirect, in the sense that Hill calls token super nerd Fogell (Christopher Mintz-Plasse, another nerdy kid find by Apatow) "Fagell"—no small feat considering a film like *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* can't even get a kind-of pro-gay message across without seeming blisteringly ignorant.

The conversational feel also allows the humour to just sort of exist on screen rather than frequently call attention to itself. There aren't so much jokes here as there are insults, not so much punch lines as comebacks, and the constant back-and-forth is engrossing enough to keep even some of the more improbable moments—such as Rogen and Bill Hader's slacker cop routine—unobtrusively amusing, if not always burst-out-laughing funny. That most of the humour is so casual also allows *Superbad* to really go big when it has to: a scene where Seth reveals he had an embarrassing childhood habit is visually and verbally stunning, and is probably somewhere near the apex of dumb comedy done smart.

To be fair, in terms of both humour and emotional effect, *Superbad* is overshadowed by Apatow's two blockbusters, and probably really isn't a whole lot more than a solid stepping stone for most of the folks involved, whether it's to nebbish starring roles (Cera) or writing stoner comedies (Rogen) or amusing sidekicks (Hill) or however they fit into the world of Hollywood comedy. Maybe Apatow's greatest strength, though, is that even when things he puts his stamp on are only good, they're still great. ♦

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# BIRD CAB TICK

**NEXT WEEK!**

**BIRD CAB TICK**



## Arctic Tale aimed at the baby cub inside

CAROLYN NIKODYM / carolyn@vneweekly.com

Walking into the Safeway the other day, I was mildly amused by a notice posted on the door: no animals allowed where ever food is sold or prepared.

Am I not an animal?

It was the day after I'd gone to see *Arctic Tale*. And the sign underlined one of my major complaints with the film (brought to us by the producers of *March of the Penguins*). It seems as though the only time we see our connection to animals is when we need to attribute human characteristics to them for our own entertainment.

We follow polar bear cub Nanu and walrus calf Seela into adulthood, as they learn the ins and outs of their Arctic existence—made more difficult by the changing climate and melting ice.

The relentless anthropomorphism—narrated with the sass of Queen Latifah—is aimed directly at kids. Despite the kill-or-be-killed existence of Arctic mammals, the film never gets terribly graphic, and when a couple of the “characters” die, they are euphemistically labelled as having made “the ultimate sacrifice” or simply “gone”—never d-e-a-d. And the romantic montage between Nanu and her male suitor is ridiculously too much. But that said, having sat through the painfully unfunny *Hot Rod* recently, *Arctic Tale* sure bites the tail off of many mainstream cinematic offerings.

**DESPITE ITS** made-for-kids-sugar-coated exterior—complete with fart jokes and disco—at its heart, *Arctic Tale* still delivers some pretty spectacular footage, acquired over 15 years of shooting by husband and wife directors Adam Revitch and Sarah Robertson.

The underwater shots are particularly compelling, including a battle between a walrus and a polar bear and the flight of thick-billed murres

**NATURE DOC**  
**OPENS FRIDAY**  
**ARCTIC TALE**  
DIRECTED BY ADAM REVITCH, SARAH ROBERTSON  
WRITTEN BY LINDA WOOLVERTON,  
MOSE RICHARDS, KRISTIN GORE  
NARRATED BY QUEEN LATIFAH

(amazing little birds that fly through the air and under water). We also get to see how a mother walrus holds her infant as the two memorize each other by rubbing their sensitive whiskers together and how they hunt and shuck clams. It isn't until a few outtakes, though, that you get to see how dangerously close the filmmakers got to their subjects, hiding behind ice outcroppings to film 2000-pound walruses just several feet away.

The “characters,” of course, are composites expertly put together by editor Beth Speigel from some 800 hours of wildlife footage. And for the most part the conceit works—if you put a bias against giving these animals a linear story in the first place aside. It is, after all, for the greater good of opening children’s eyes to the perils of global warming.

Some online critics complained of that message being too heavy handed, and I don’t know that I agree with that. Sure, the story and the footage are tailored to fit the thesis—which is problematic, though for other reasons—but the term “global warming” is only explicitly spoken during the credits, and the film only draws on the interconnection between humans and our activity and Arctic mammals in the final sentences of the narration. The fact remains that Arctic ice has receded by some 20 per cent in recent decades, and for animals that depend on the ice to hunt, this is not a good thing.

Hopefully it won’t take us until 2040—the projected date of an ice-free Arctic—to remember that we’re animals, too. ▀



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# Delpy tries to reprise a feeling with *2 Days in Paris*

JONATHAN BUSCH / [jonathan@voweekly.com](mailto:jonathan@voweekly.com)

If *Rush Hour 3* or the last two episodes of *Sex and the City* weren't enough Parisian wank for you, *2 Days in Paris* should hopefully drive a final but eloquent nail into that coffin. Julie Delpy, possibly tired of being a French muse (previously having been

that of Jean-Luc Godard, Krystof Kieslowski and Richard Linklater), writes, directs and performs music for her first feature, her own muse well, herself.

Delpy stars as Marion, a feisty blonde photographer who returns to her hometown Paris with American live-in boyfriend Jack (Adam Goldberg). It's their last stop after a decent jaunt across Europe, and it has them curling up in Marion's one-bedroom character suite on the top floor of her parents' house. Mom and Pop (Marie Pillet and Albert Delpy—you guessed it, Miss Julie's real parents) hardly speak any English, while Jack only knows the basic French greetings, so the initial kooky misunderstandings foreshadow a possible disintegration of their relationship. And so Marion and Jack go forth on a big adventure of tiny, private emotions as they encounter apartment mold, dirty paintings and the ex-lovers.

So let's make that coy pink elephant at the centre of the room, *Before Sunset*, feel welcome. Richard Linklater's stunning, sublime sequel to the post-gran 1990s drive-in classic *Before Sunrise* saw Delpy and Ethan Hawke as former one-night-only lovecats reunite in Paris nine years after the night they met in Vienna. While Delpy and Hawke co-scripted *Sunset* with Linklater, its deliriously romantic style is a result of the director's gifted patience with lengthy camerawork and dramatic.

OPENS FRIDAY  
**2 DAYS IN PARIS**  
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY JULIE DELPY  
STARRING JULIE DELPY, ADAM GOLDBERG

## CITY OF LOVE

WHILE DELPY CHANNELS enough of the *Before* series to warrant a spot for *2 Days* in a holiday season DVD gift pack, the result is more like a Dogme-fused reworking of *The Break-up* for the Thursday afternoon pints-at-the Sugarbowl set. Oddball characters irrational heterosexual egotism and the heartwrenching last five minutes add up to more of a romantic comedy than a meditation on romance, and that ain't half-bad.

Goldberg, all buffed up and hunky since his mid-90s guest spot on *Friends* as Chandler's creepy roommate, is for the most part a fine, funny match-up for the couple's trials, especially when he gets pissed off. He bumbles through the city with enough comedic confidence to let other players share in on the jokes, during both a sequence with Delpy's half-psychotic dad in a night-marsh farmer's market, and a marvelous drop-in from a "fairy" at a fast-food restaurant (played with grandiose subtlety by Daniel Bruhl).

While it's easy to resist this piece de-resistance, its nonetheless appropriate matinee activity while fighting a tough hangover. Just bring some Advil, because there's a lot of bickering. ♦

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IMMACULATE MACHINE / 40



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## Lord I'm crazy 'bout Our Mercury (just like the rest of E-town)

### INSANELY VENERABLE (AND INSANELY POPULAR) LOCAL BAND CALLS IT QUILTS AFTER 12 (12!) YEARS

ROSS MOROZ / [ross@vneweekly.com](mailto:ross@vneweekly.com)

For local music fans of a certain age and inclination—like, say, myself—it is tough to imagine an Edmonton music scene without **Our Mercury**. Since forming as teenaged pop-punk sensation Misdemeanor in the mid-'90s, the band has endured name changes, line-up shuffles, a cross-country relocation and even the odd hospitalization, through it all churning out their consistent yet constantly evolving brand of hard rock.

Fans of the venerable trio-cum-five piece will have to get used to the idea rather quickly, however: as of this week's two-night double-bill with **Shout Out Out Out**, **Our Mercury** is officially calling it a career, and while the split is unanimously amicable, there is more than a little bit of—if not bitterness—at least wistfulness in the air as founding members Ben Stevenson and John Watson try to explain why a band that has overcome more than its fair share of adversity over a decade-plus on the scene is packing it in smack dab in the middle of what, with a well-received album on a prestigious Canadian indie label—Winnipeg's

#### PREVIEW

FRI, AUG 17 AND SAT, AUG 18 (8 PM)

#### OUR MERCURY

WITH SHOUT OUT OUT OUT, SAM SERAC, ALL OUT DJs  
PLANET ZE (10055 - 80TH AVE), \$22.50

Smallman Records—and an increasingly killer live show is seemingly a high-water mark for the group.

"We've done everything we wanted to do as a band creatively," Stevenson says, explaining the band's demise as a result of a dearth of financial more than musical rewards.

"Personally I feel at this point we're creatively capable of maintaining a career if we wanted to," he continues, "but we're not be able to move in that direction because of the forces of other people's commitments and stuff like that."

Watson echoes Stevenson's bitter-sweet analysis of the band's disparate levels of artistic, and commercial success.

"I've been working this crap ass job," he grousing, "and [playing in a band] is one of those things that if you don't get out of it at some point, if it's not going to support me, how can I keep devoting so much of my life to it?"

"This has been the number one priority in my life for like the last 12 years just about, you know," Watson continues, "and I've passed up a lot of personal opportunities because I was so stoked about things with the band."

**IT'S AN ALL-TOO-COMMON** refrain from local—hell, Canadian—bands of a similar age and level of success: music for music's sake is a fine ethos to espouse in one's late teens, but as the years (the 26-year-old Stevenson mentions "the big 3-0 on the horizon") and the debts ("My financial situation is a wreck because of this band," he adds) pile up, being one of the best live acts in the city and writing quality, complex-yet-accessible pop tunes is less and less of a motivation to keep up what is basically an extremely expensive and stress-inducing hobby. Still, Stevenson and Watson can't help but indulge in a certain amount of speculative "what if"-ing, especially as some of this city's newer, wetter-behind-the-ears acts are seeing their fingers graze the brass ring of admittedly minor commercial success—videos on Much, nominations for awards, cross-coun-

try radio play—Our Mercury never quite grasped. Not that they tried all that hard at it, though.

"We're not salesmen—we never wanted to 'market' our 'brand' or whatever," Watson scoffs. "I mean, there's a certain amount of cockiness to us—we think we're good, of course, but I'm not going to go around plugging us to everyone. It's just not our style."

"You grow up and you watch the way music is sold and packaged on TV and stuff and it's really kind of like depressing sometimes," he continues. "It's like, do we really want to be in that machine? I mean, I would love to make serious dough off of this, but the kind of things you'd have to do ..."

"One thing that we've never really had is that full coordinated [commercial] effort," Stevenson interrupts. "We've made a full coordinated effort to be writing and creating the best music possible, but we haven't had that full coordinated effort to try to make a living at it, because it never has been everyone's interest to do that—it's always been maybe some of our interests, but it's never been fully that way with everybody."

"And besides," he adds, "to make a living from playing music, to make the kind of living you could much more easily make doing a multitude of other things, is next to impossible—but if it's going to happen, it'll happen because everyone wants it to and is working at it. Things don't just fall in your lap, for the most part. With us, I think we could have worked harder in that direction, but at the same time, what was really the most important thing was the music, and that's what we'll be left with. And so for us it's sad to be giving that up, but we can't be continuing to devote so much time and effort to something that only costs money." ▶

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Check our website for our podcast and exclusive live video footage of Our Mercury

# Last Legion thwarts the mulleted death metal goons

JOSEF BRAUN / josef@vnewweekly.com

This adventure chronicle traces the Excalibur blade as it is whisked from its secret hiding place on an island prison in the Mediterranean by Romulus Augustus (Thomas Sangster), the kid emperor who's meant to be the last of Caesar's bloodline, to a grassy fortress in England where a super-battle provides our History Channel-esque climax, and finally into a big ol' rock where it patiently waits to be famously plucked out by King Arthur in numerous other movies. It probably won't surprise anyone to discover that *The Last Legion* is strictly Saturday matine fare: treading lightly through legend and history, mixing up dopey gags and doper love subplots with plentiful swordplay and sword fetish, it is perfectly suitable for the kids and passably engaging for the parents.

Set in 460 AD, wooden exposition gets chewed on and spit out for a good 15 minutes or so before things get jumping, with Romulus's crowning ceremony swiftly followed by screaming invaders who kill his parents and burn Rome practically to the ground. Good thing the kid has pals like Ambrosius (Ben Kingsley), an Obi-Wan type in Moses gear who can both perform cool slight-of-hand tricks and kick some serious ass with his staff, and Aurelius (Colin Firth), a super-skilled military commander

who has grown weary and cynical after countless wars but is still completely loyal to the Empire.

These guys and their uniformly heroic entourage—among them an Indian woman (Aishwarya Rai) who fights like a demon, wears pants and apparently has no nipples—rescue Romulus from captivity and escort him to temporary safety in Britannia,



## ADVENTURE

OPENING DAY

### THE LAST LEGION

DIRECTED BY DOUG LEEFER

WRITTEN BY JEZ BUTTERWORTH

STARRING COLIN FIRTH, BEN KINGSLEY, AISH-

WARYA RAI, PETER MULLAN

where against near-impossible odds they manage to kill two different sets of grimacing bad guys and their bottomless hordes of mulleted death metal goons all in one go. Throw in a rallying speech or two and that's pretty much it.

**DIRECTOR DOUG LEFFER'S** résumé leans heavily on art department gigs and directing stray episodes of shows like *Xena* and *Babylon 5*, which should give you an idea of what's in store here. But at 110 minutes, *The Last Legion* certainly lasts longer than a syndicated television action-adventure, and that's a problem. There's precious little in the way of colour or detail to speak of, and while the story takes the curious tack



of debunking the magical aspects of the Arthurian legend, and the cast has been shrewdly peppered with more race and gender diversity than you might expect, we're still basically just moving from one standard fight/reversal/flee sequence to another, none having anything to do with real character development or informed by any diverting sense of style.

Only one question keeps nagging me after seeing *The Last Legion*: why

so many strong actors? I'm not certain they make the film any better than it might have been otherwise, nor can I figure out what they get to do here that would have lured them into the job. Are Britain's finest really just desperate to don chain mail, chop each other up and shout out shitty dialogue? Is the sequel to 300 going to star Timothy Spall, Emma Thompson and Vanessa Redgrave? Does the BBC have anything to say about this? ▶

AUSSIE

SYDNEY FILM PAGE 21

home and traditions, then made to readapt to the invaders' culture—call it "survival of the refit." While *Yolngu Boy* doesn't quite dive deeply enough into this context, its contrasts—between the boys' hunting in the wilds along Northern Australia's coast and the food court in the city, or between the useless cell phone that Milika is momentarily upset about knocking overboard while looking for the hunting knife that can truly save them from an immediate threat—speak volumes. The police act condescending to one Yolngu man, while Lorrupu questions the whites' law and the trio steals a boat from crocodile poachers.

The film rides the teenagers' churning anger, despair and elation through out. Even the brief romance in the film—between Lorrupu and the chief elder's granddaughter—is never pat or sexist, just free and easy, with the girl refreshingly more mature and direct than these confused boys trying to become men. The heartbreak ending is neither naive about how white culture is destroying a millennia-old way of life nor too hopeful about the power of ancient traditions and beliefs.

**WHILE SARAH WATTS'** *Look Both Ways* (2005) offers glimpses of the beach, cricket and Adelaide's transit system, this film about a few disparate people pushed together by the ripples of a stranger's death in a train accident could have easily become one of those generic meditations on death, love and the strange twists of life. Instead, animator Watts, making her feature debut, intersperses the speed and intensity of drawings and photos throughout the otherwise live-action *Look Both Ways*, immersing us in the imagination, anxiety and reflection of artist Meryl (Justine Clarke) and news pics snapper Nick (William McInnes). The result isn't overwhelming or pretentiously poetic, but a remarkably dense and powerful picture of people's yearning and struggling.

The clinical camera shots here, along with the rolling moods of Meryl's paint-smeared seascapes, makes for a mix of detached observation and scrappy involvement. Even the pop-folk interlude-montages work, surrounded as they are by Watts's sure use of juxtaposed images, quiet moments, and fumbling conversations. Nick's memories of his dying father, triggered by a coffee cup, are sharp, bitter recollections of a man wanly facing his last days. When he and Meryl meet, they have some frazzled, unintentionally amusing conversations.

Life isn't about fate or conspiracies or people's agendas, Watt seems to be arguing, but just about how "things just happen"—that's the sadness and beauty of it. We can't always know what to say or how to be there for someone else, but we can comb through our lives, parting ways with our frayed selves and tousled emotions. *Look Both Ways* is about the instant you cross the street, finally making a move. It's the mess of the day-to-day, the loose ends to grasp for a moment, that make us. As one character says, "We're gonna stay here until we get a glimmer of knowledge, OK?" ▶

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# Immaculate Machine reinterprets its *Fables* for the live performance

LEWIS KELLY / lewis@vneweekly.com

**W**hen Immaculate Machine takes the stage at the Velvet Underground, listeners will be in for a treat. The group has a well-deserved reputation for getting audiences moving.

"I love coming to Edmonton," says Kathryn Calder, one third of Immaculate Machine. "It's always really nice when a crowd responds and you don't feel like you're up there 'entertaining'..."

The crowd is sure to be rockin'—unless people are mesmerized by the sheer spectacle of Machine playing live. Given the complexity of the band's sound, many people are surprised to learn that Immaculate Machine is, in fact, just a trio.

"I don't know how it ended up that we try to do as much as we can with our limbs," says Calder, who plays keys with her right hand and bass parts on a synth with her left. Brooke Gaptoe plays guitar while Luke Kozlowski hits the skins, and all three Machinists can (and do) sing like birds.

However, the band won't be performing a perfect recreation of its latest release, *Fables*.

"With *Ones and Zeros* [the band's previous album], we were more concerned with being able to play the record live," explains Calder. "*Fables* is impossible to play with three people live. We'd already done the live record."

The whole of the new album was

PREVIEW

/ FRI, AUG 17 (8 PM)  
**IMMACULATE MACHINE**  
WITH THE WET SECRETS, LIONS, TIGERS AND BEARS  
VELVET UNDERGROUND, \$10

multi-tracked, which afforded the band almost limitless flexibility in the studio, but makes producing the same sound live impossible, so the band will be taking some creative approaches when performing the album's denser material live.

**FABLES ALSO FEATURES** a musical cameo from across the pond. On the single "Jarhand," if you listen closely you may be able to hear Alex Kapranos—of Franz Ferdinand fame—and English rockers the Cribs providing some backup vocals.

During the recording of *Fables*, the Brits showed up at the studio while hanging out with Nardwuar the Human Serviette. "[We said] 'you're here and you're British, you should probably sing on our record,'" explains Calder. "It's fun to sing on somebody's record when it's not hard."

Fans of the band should be sure to catch the show as it may be the last time the Machine comes to town for quite some time.

"I don't know if we were planning on doing this full-time when we started—it just sort of happened that way," says Calder. "Our new goal is that we want to go to Europe lots." ▶

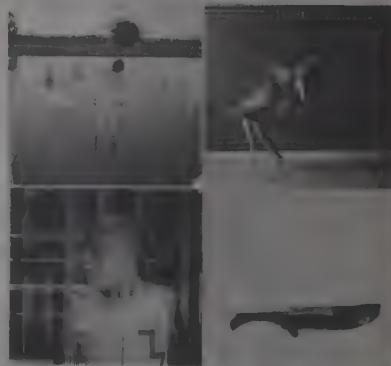


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## Wilco packs up the computer and Cline brings his guitar to *Sky Blue Sky*

DAVID GERRY / david@vnewsworld.com

You have to be a brave man to step into a band like Wilco almost 15 years into its sprawling, critically acclaimed, heart-breaking career. A palpable excitement grows in the music world when frontman Jeff Tweedy coughs too close to a microphone, and even the dabblers and dilettantes among the band's fans can be prone to fervent debates about the merits of *Summerteeth* against *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*; it's generally better to avoid hardcore discussions, where a defense of *A Ghost Is Born* over *Being There* can strain, if not never, otherwise healthy friendships.

The blood in Nels Cline's veins must be as steely as his guitar strings, then. Cline—a renowned experimental guitarist who has spent most of his California-based career picking his way through everything from purely instrumental jazz-influenced trios to more subdued, if not more traditional, folk groups—hooked up with Tweedy and company in 2004, when the band was touring for *A Ghost Is Born*.

Though originally slated just to be a touring partner, Cline was asked by the band to help write and record when they sat down for its latest, the rambling, guitar-driven *Sky Blue Sky*. As Cline explains, the decision to join the band full-time was one that didn't even require the frontal lobe, even though he was well aware of what kind of fans with which he'd be getting himself involved.

"I had known Jeff and followed the band ever since the Geraldine Fibbers [one of Cline's many musical incarnations] opened for Golden Smog, and I've followed everything he's done since; to me he's just one of the most interesting people in the world when it comes to that guitar part of his brain," Cline explains languorously from his home in LA, a week before joining the band for the tour. "I was really more concerned with trying to figure out how I was going to fit in to the band and really contribute something. There

**PREVUE**  
SAT, AUG 18  
**WILCO**  
JUBILEE, \$39

was really no way for me to conceive of what all the ardent Wilco fans were going to think, and I'm not really terribly interested in all the vicarious drama anyway."

**CLINE MIGHT NOT BE** interested in it, but that doesn't mean there hasn't been a lot of it. *Sky Blue Sky* has proved to be one of the more divisive Wilco albums to date, with critics and fans alike calling it everything from a bold and welcome step in a new direction to one of the band's biggest mistakes. It's proved so divisive, in fact, some people can't help but damn it with praise one high-profile—if not exactly highly regarded—critic compared *Sky* favourably with the Eagles, a charge Tweedy and the band vehemently deny.

All that might have been a bit easier to dodge if the band's new sound didn't seem to owe a significant debt to Cline's work. Though it's thematically similar, Smog's sound essentially trades the computer-inspired experimentation of *YHF/Ghost* for the kind of unkempt, virtuosic guitar work that Cline built a career on. For his part, Cline is just happy that it seems as though he had some kind of effect on the band.

"There were probably only three or four artists in the world that I would have been willing to give up some time on my own work to play with, that I respect enough to do that, and I'm glad I had a chance to fit in and even help shape them a bit," Cline explains. "I know the band has a certain amount of preciousness to its fans, they don't like to see any kinds of changes, but I know that they were really happy with everything, and so was I. Ultimately that's what's gratifying and rewarding about playing with a new band." ■

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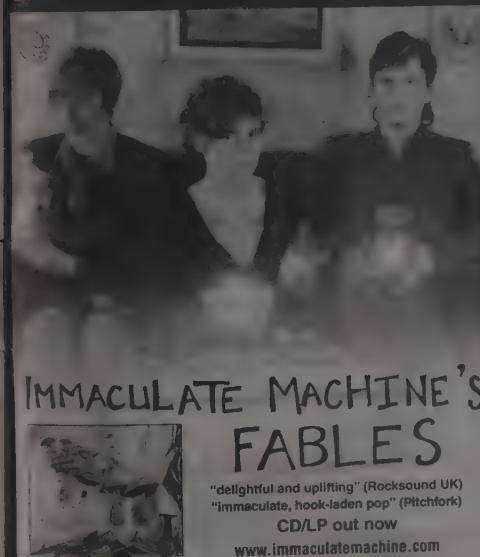
Amy Millan

Photo by Jason Kujirai



Andy Palacio &amp; the Garifuna Collective

## CONCERT: AUGUST 17, VELVET UNDERGROUND



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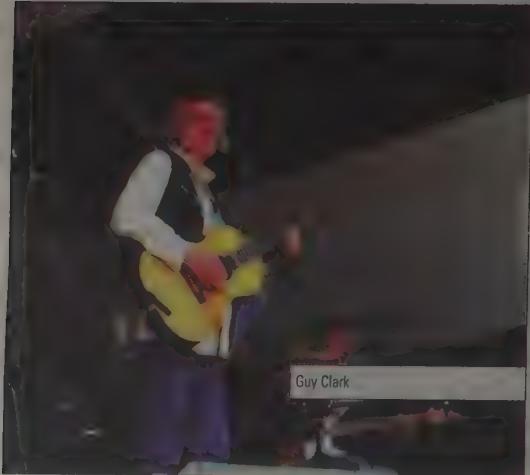
Vintage

REVUE

# FOLKFEST

All day long, the sun beat down on us as we sat in the shade of a nearby tree. We had planned to go to the beach, but the music festival was more fun. It was a great weekend. While some may have complained about the heat, I enjoyed it.

After a long day of music, we decided to go to the beach. We saw many people there, including Amy Mills, who was performing at the festival. She was a great performer and her songs were wonderful.



Guy Clark



Michael Franti

A large, stylized graphic featuring the words "4 HOODS OUT" in a bold, blocky font, with "OUR MERCURY SANK SERAC" stacked below it in a smaller, serif font. The graphic has a warm, orange-to-yellow gradient.

**OUR MERCURY  
SANK SERAC**

**ALL OUT**

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY**

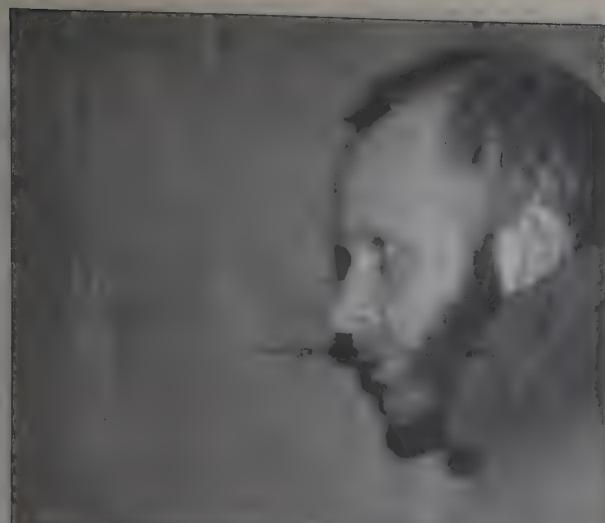
**AUGUST 17/18**

**PLANET ZE**

**VUE WEEKLY** **BRENTOLIVEK** **cjsr** **WAVY**



PREVIEW / THU, AUG 23 (9 PM) / JOEY ONLY OUTLAW BAND / WITH GERTRUDE / BLACKSPOT CAFÉ, \$15  
Joey Only Outlaw Band—led by one Joey Only on vocals and guitar, with the instrumentation rounded out by his standard drums and bass along with the not-so-standard cello and accordion—sounds like it should be an outlaw country band. But haven't you always been told not to judge a book by its cover and a band by its name? Sure, there's some countrified pickin' going on all over *Joey Only Outlaw Band EP*, the group's last record release—there's a new DVD available now, which also happens to include most of the songs that the group plans to put down for its follow-up album—but that cello and accordion, not to mention Only's vocals, go a long way towards shading the country vibe with a theatrical one draped in cabaret-like colours. —EDEN MUNRO / eden@vnewswEEKLY.com



PREVIEW / SAT, AUG 18 (4 PM) / RON LEARY / THE BLACK DOG, FREE In last year's *The Road In Between* Windsor, ON songwriter Ron Leary crafted an album that is burdened with the weight of the world, but which refuses to buckle under the pressure. A song like "You've Got It All Wrong" addresses the woes of a damaged relationship with an intelligent and careful approach that avoids juvenile clichés and instead goes for the emotional heart of the situation, leaving the story partially unsaid and letting the listener decide just how it all turns out. It's that sense of continuum that gives life to the folksy strumming that drives the album and makes the songs feel as though they are glimpses into a complicated world without tidy endings. There's a melancholy that pervades the record, but it's not depressing—more like a quiet and subdued contemplation that would be perfectly suited for a summer afternoon in a pub someplace sorta like The Black Dog. —EDEN MUNRO / eden@vnewswEEKLY.com

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The kids are alright  
by I Am Ghost

JOEL KELLY / joel@vneweekly.com

When it comes to metal, it seems you can never have enough subgenres. Hardcore, thrash, gothic, glamcore—I Am Ghost's lead singer Steve Juliano has heard them all, and he's tired of trying to fit his band into one label.

"We still don't have a clue what we're supposed to be," he says. "With the new stuff that we're writing, the best I can describe it is aggressive, dark, epic music."

One label that Juliano definitely doesn't want to be associated with is Christian. When I bring up the question, it's obvious it's a bit of a prickly issue.

"It's not like we don't believe in things, we just never believed that's a good mixture. We were starting to classify in the Christian scene, and it kind of bothered us," he explains. "We don't want to be a preaching band."

In fact, Juliano attributes most, if not all, of the group's previous association with that scene with two recently departed members, Brian and Kerith Telestai.

"There's four or five dudes who don't have a devout background, and they did," he says. "They were dictating what we were about. We just wanted to have more fun. If I want to say the word 'fuck' on stage, or if we

FRI, AUG 17 (7 PM)  
**I AM GHOST**  
WITH STRUNG OUT, A WILHELM SCREAM  
UNWOODIE LOUNGE, \$20

want to have a video with some bleeding corpses or something else awesome ... we want to do it because the kids might dig it."

**THE KIDS ARE WHAT** Juliano affectionately refers to as I Am Ghost's fans have quickly developed a reputation for coming to their shows in full-on goth regalia.

"They're a good crazy, not a bad crazy," he laughs. "It's just fun—the whole storyline of requiem, vampires and angels and demons battling each other. If they want to dress up and sing along, that's cool. I want to give them a stage show."

He admits he does relish the role of stageman, and is entirely comfortable with being the centre of attention on stage. "For the band, they're musicians first," he explains. "For me, I'm a performer."

"If I ever see a fan that wants to talk, I'm going to spend as much time as possible trying to talk with them. The singer really needs to interact with the crowd. That's why kids grasp onto."



# Name that obscure tune

MUSIC

## ENTER SANDOR

STEVEN SANDOR  
steven@vneweekly.com

### TWO GALLANTS THE SCENERY OF FAREWELL SADDLE CREEK

MARY CHRISTA O'KEEFE / marychrista@vneweekly.com

I feel silly going gooey over a couple of San Francisco youngsters ambling around the kind of golden faux-back-porch rock that they weren't even in their mommas' womb's for when the genre graced AM radio. But they do such a smashing job of it—they'd sound at home in a set with the Eagles, Dr Hook, Canned Heat and maybe even some Country Joe & the Fish.

Although *The Scenery of Farewell* is a little gem of an EP developed in an acoustic, piecemeal style, it's all about shredded hearts and faded dreams, and these are boys who can evoke woe and strife with just a piano, fiddle, harmonica and desperate croak. Like the contents of a jug with three X's, Two Gallants is at its best when the music is bracing and nearly too intense to take. Hopefully the upcoming third full-length, due this fall, contains more of the band's trademark bleak, panoramic takes on the American dream than weepers about bad breakups and women. The world is stuffed with love songs, but what we could really use now are some torchbearers for justice.

### HEAVY TRASH GOING WAY OUT WITH HEAVY TRASH YEP ROC

MICHAEL RAUT / mraut@vneweekly.com

Veteran New York rockabilly, blues-trash icons Jon Spencer and Matt Verta Lee actually approached the realm of musical maturity with their self-titled, debut Heavy Trash album. For the follow-up, they found themselves at a crossroads; they could continue down their current path and sell their souls to the world of country blues music, or turn back to their previous direction and forge onwards in the garage vein.

It seems it was important to the production duo to prove that they were still true to their punk background with this album. Where the self-titled disc thrived on intricate percussion tracks integrated with minimalist kit drums, this album is built upon a foundation of crashing cymbals and fuzzed-out guitars, played with no restraint in some instances.

After creating one of the most original new takes on traditional rockabilly, Heavy Trash goes way out from its original sound here, making an album that blends in with the legions of echo-laden, lo-fi psych-rockabilly acts. It seems that the idea of maturity was too akin to the dreaded concept of growing up for these two middle-aged wild men.

My wife loves karaoke. She has every one of the *Karaoke Revolution* series of games for our old PlayStation 2—which, of course, gets me to occasionally show off my not-so-mad skills on Queen and David Bowie's "Under Pressure."

As a karaoke fan, she's absolutely addicted to NBC's *The Singing Bee*, the new game show which sees contestants try to fill in the lyrics of pop-music classics. It's *Name That Tune* on ecstasy—hosted by former boy-band star Joey Fatone, it's got dancing girls, flashing lights ... a sensory overload.

But, like its precursor *Name That Tune*, *The Singing Bee* needs pop music to survive. It needs an arsenal of famous and familiar pop songs that both contestants and audience members need to recognize.

A generation from now, a show like this could not happen. With pop albums selling so many fewer units than they did in the generations that came before podcasts and personal web radio (LastFM, anyone?), the next era of music will likely be one without anthems.

And, with so much choice available (once again, thanks to satellite radio and the internet), kids can choose to be very specific or eclectic with their tastes, and can discover their parents' copy of Fleetwood Mac's *Rumors* in their own time, if at all.

Really, on today's charts, what artists have recorded songs that we can all sing along to—Usher, Nelly Furtado, Nickelback? They may be popular, but we no longer have AM radio to overwhelm us with hourly plays of all the hits, so their songs no longer permeate our consciousness, if we want them to or not.

It's obvious that the music biz sees *The Singing Bee* as a chance to try and reconnect fans with pop music. On its website, fans can scroll through songs that have recently been used on the show, and a simple click links you to e-commerce sites where you can buy the music. There's a download section on the site (even though, as of last week, it didn't work). And a pop quiz online game.

No thanks ... I'd rather play my iLike game on Facebook. And I'll wait it out until my wife gets sick of the show Soon, hopefully. v

*Steven Sandor is a former editor-in-chief of Vue Weekly, now an editor and author living in Toronto*

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SATURDAY AUGUST 18

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SATURDAY AUGUST 18

# THE MARTINGALES AUTOMATA & ANNUNAKI

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ALBUM REVIEWS

# NEW SOUNDS



## THE HYLOZOISTS LA NOUVELLE GAUCHE

LEWIS KELLY / lewiss@vnewswEEKLY.com

 **THIS ROCKS**  
The recently re-released debut record from Canadian super-group the Hylozoists is a strange beast. There are no vocals to be found, but many of the tracks lack a strong melodic voice, which can make them feel like elevator music at first blush. Add to this diverse and unconventional instrumentation—most notably a wide selection of vibraphones and the like—and the result is a bit like the soundtrack to a bad acid flashback.

But if you have a little patience with the Hylozoists, the band can take you to a strange and awesome place. Well, take your ears, at least. Intricate and involving rhythms weave together and compliment such ghostly echoes of melody as are to be found. *La Nouvelle Gauche* is not for the faint of heart. Those who can stomach it, however, will find their patience well rewarded.

## THE DOERS GAILEY RELUCTANT RECORDINGS

BRYAN BIRTLES / bryan@vnewswEEKLY.com

 **THIS ROCKS**  
The Doers have put out an album that only furthers the band's well-deserved reputation. Full of sometimes angular and sometimes sunshiny guitar hooks, and the kind of quirky subject matter that gives this jaded record reviewer a boner, *Gailey* lives up to its name, being a solidly fun recording that you could dance to at a party.

There are a lot of highlights on the recording, but one thing to look out for is a really great cover of the Modern Lovers's "New Kind of Neighbourhood." One of the bounciest tracks on the album, it's sure to find a place on many of my mixtapes from here on out.

## SON DE LA FRONTERA CAL WORLD VILLAGE

JEREMY DERKSEN / jeremy@vnewswEEKLY.com

 **THIS ROCKS**  
Some fine dark wines acquire more velvety, earth-tones as they age, and some music does, too. The well-aged music of flamenco masters Diego del Gastor, El Mellizo and other early 20th century contemporaries acquires new richness in these recordings. On the group's second album of traditional Andalusian flamenco, *Son de la Frontera* demonstrates a maturity that few groups ever achieve. These 11 songs—featuring classic compositions by the masters alongside the group's own—display both virtuosic talent and heart-rending beauty, making this recording accessible to both the audiophile and the neophyte.

The group's simple instrumentation of Cuban tres guitar, classic flamenco guitar, vocals and hand-clap percussion evokes the rugged passion of the mountainous region from which its music is born. Brilliant arpeggiated melodies revolve effortlessly around one another, rising and falling, until new melodies emerge from their shadows. The singer's smoky voice rings with soulful authenticity. Alternately jubilant or mournful, this album captures the true

essence of flamenco's traditional folk roots. Unlike so much over-perfected music, the production lets the songs breath, imbuing them with greater passion and resonance, as though they had been recorded in a hillside village at night, the dust rising from the dancers' feet as the fire rages on. As the flavours become more refined and the sound more rare so, like the wine, does the music become more priceless.

## THE MEAT PUPPETS RISE TO YOUR KNEES

ALEX KONYE / alex@vnewswEEKLY.com

 **THIS IS OK**  
in every rocker's life when you either break down, cut your hair, play even louder and deal with your 17 paternity suits or you decide to mellow out, put in earplugs and give thanks that your brain is still intact after years of substance abuse.

The Meat Puppet bros Curt and Cris are choosing the latter. Even though they never thrashed the fastest or jammed the loudest, these guys managed to hone an edge on the average pop song. This album is the same Meat Puppets, minus a youthful anglo.

The path is similar to the eminence-mellowing of Yo La Tengo, who started out with garage rock in the bowery, and ended up with bossanova on the brain, only with the Kirkwoods there is less of a departure from the original sound. There's one or two tracks where you think maybe the drums might peak the levels, but it's just good, mellow grunge.



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## ARIES (MAR 21 - APR 19)

"Dear Rob: Have your apprentices been composing your column lately? Or have you outsourced the writing to Vedic fortunetellers in Calcutta? The horoscopes just don't sound like you. They're, I don't know, goofier or something. Have you been smoking more dope than usual? —Lonely for the Old Rob." Dear Lonely: I always write every horoscope, and I never take drugs. In fact, I think it's YOU that has changed. Many of you Aries have been so deeply immersed in mutation lately that you don't realize how much you've mutated. You assume everyone around you is different only because you don't know how different you've become.

## TAURUS (APR 20 - MAY 19)

"I am in continuous pursuit of the colour red," says artist Andy Goldsworthy, whose specialty is creating large outdoor sculptures made of natural objects. "As I approach the source of the colour red, I understand it more." That's why he's so fond of red rocks, whose hue comes from iron, the same element that makes our blood red. Your next assignment, Taurus, is to develop a more intimate and expansive relationship with red. Colour therapists say it inspires vigour, zeal, determination and primordial longing. But don't just let the experts define your connection with red. Find your own meanings, too.

## GEMINI (MAY 21 - JUN 20)

In his poem "The Two Trees," William

BUTLER YEATS says one tree is holy and grows within the heart. Its branches and trembling flowers thrive on joy. The changing colours of its fruit please the stars, and its leaves give the waves their melody. The second tree has broken boughs and blackened leaves, and is full of "the ravens of unresting thought." I bring this to your attention, Gemini, because in the coming week it really is up to you and your free will which of these two trees you spend most of your time with. The astrological configurations have nothing to say on that matter.

## CANCER (JUN 21 - JUL 22)

If you cooperate with the cosmic rhythms in the coming weeks, they will stimulate some interesting changes in the way your brain works. Here are a few of the developments you can expect: a five-point rise in your IQ; a boost in your ability to solve puzzles; a growing knack for heading off bad moods before they even erupt; a sixth sense for distinguishing between what people say they're doing and what they're actually doing; and a dramatic improvement in your ability to know what you don't want.

## LEO (JUL 23 - AUG 22)

Leo JK Rowling is the second-richest woman entertainer in the world because of her seven best-selling novels about Harry Potter. It wasn't easy for her in the beginning, however. Her first book in the series was rejected by eight publishers before Bloomsbury decided to risk it. I nominate Rowling to be your inspirational role model for the rest of 2007. Leo. According to my analysis of the omens, you should be working (and play-

ing) hard to produce an enduring creation that may take a while to make its mark.

## VIRGO (AUG 23 - SEP 22)

Jayanyi Beuraheng, a mother of eight, decided to travel from her small village in southern Thailand to Malaysia for a day-long shopping trip. But she accidentally boarded the wrong bus, transferred to another wrong bus, and ended up in a distant city where everyone spoke a language she didn't understand. Her money ran out, and she started begging in the streets. Accused of being an illegal immigrant, she was given shelter in a social services hostel. Years went by. Finally three people from her village visited the hostel by chance, and she was able to communicate in her native tongue. Through their assistance, she went home. The moral of the story, as far as you're concerned, is this: whatever wrong turn you made, and however long ago it was, you're ready to go back home.

## LIBRA (SEP 23 - OCT 22)

If you don't want to peter out with a whimper in September, you should exit with a bang as soon as possible. In another couple of weeks, you'll have to answer to fate, whereas right now fate still has to answer to you. So pull out your calendar and schedule splashy goodbyes, last laughs and colourful climaxes that leave no room for misinterpretation. Give going-away gifts to part-time nemeses so that they can't possibly go away mad. And make sure that the Day of Reckoning happens on your home turf.

## SCORPIO (OCT 23 - NOV 21)

Physicist John Cramer has made progress

in his research into the feasibility of time travel. But he can't take his work to its next phase without an infusion of \$20 000. You might want to consider donating, Scorpio. If you did, and he managed to perfect time travel in his future experiments, you'd no doubt be high on the priority list to use the new technology. And that means you could go back and correct for the wrong turn you made in April, which I'd really like to see you do. If you don't have the inclination to contribute to Cramer's research, at least try this alternative: go to each person affected by your deviation and make a thoughtful attempt at atonement and correction.

## SAGITTARIUS (NOV 22 - DEC 21)

Avoid getting set in my ways. I have a policy of changing my religion regularly. I've tried every variation of all the biggies, but in recent years I've preferred creating my own. In July my chosen faith was the First Church of the Last Chance. This month it's the Tempestuous Temple of Babbling Benevolence. Given that your personal spiritual tradition is a little worn around the edges, Sagittarius, you might consider a similar approach. It's time to experiment! Whatever fresh religion you invent, I hereby name you the Chief Rabbi, High Pope and Dalai Lama of it.

## CAPRICORN (DEC 22 - JAN 19)

Welcome to the Season of Temporary Insanity, Capricorn. According to my analysis of the omens, your imminent immersion in lunacy, delirium and freakiness won't hurt a bit—and may even stir up exotic varieties of pleasure and amusement. For best results, keep the following advice bubbling and frothing in the back of your mind. (1)

"Only when he no longer knows what he is doing does the painter do good things." —Edgar Degas. (2) "Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment." —Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks. (3) "All of us are crazy good in one way or another." —Yiddish saying (4) "You are either losing your mind—or gaining your soul." —Julia Cameron.

## AQUARIUS (JAN 20 - FEB 18)

Are you unsure about whether you should leap into a lasting bond with a certain numinous creature you've been fooling around with? If so, you might be interested in obtaining a Sacred Certificate of Short-Duration Marriage. This convenient license can provide you with the security of knowing that your commitment doesn't have to be forever. Maybe that will free you to hurl yourself headlong into the experience. It's just a suggestion, Aquarius. Do you have any other areas in your life where you'd like to achieve maximum combustion while maintaining a sense of safety and security?

## PISCES (FEB 19 - MAR 20)

Mahatma Gandhi called his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. I suggest that you give the same title to the next chapter of your own epic quest. From an astrological perspective it's an excellent time to make the experimental pursuit of truth your top priority and greatest joy. The best way to launch the process is to exuberantly suspend all of your fixed ideas about the way the world works. Be a cheerful skeptic who loves evocative questions. Be an innocent and curious explorer who thrives on getting your mind blown by unexpected insights. v



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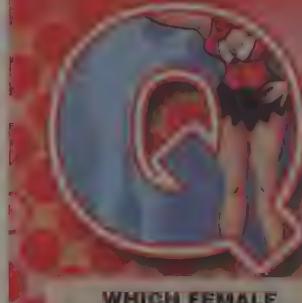
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**SEX IN THE CITY ISSUE!**

# From testy trannies to testosterone tests (to awkward headlines)

DEAR ANDREA

I read your column about potential causes of a husband's lackluster performance in the bedroom. You mentioned that her husband should talk to his doctor about low testosterone, and I thought you might be interested in more information on that. As you said, low testosterone (low T) and diabetes are linked. In fact, a recent study found that men with diabetes are more than twice as likely to have low T than other men. To educate men about the link between low T and diabetes, the American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE) created the "Take Charge, Talk T" program, which includes a pamphlet that men can take to their doctors or diabetes educators if they think they are experiencing low T symptoms.

If you would like more information, please visit [TalkLowT.org](http://TalkLowT.org). On behalf of my client, Solvay Pharmaceuticals, which markets the testosterone therapy AndroGel, I am including fact sheets. If

you plan on covering low T or T therapy in the future, I would be happy to set up an interview with a doctor or low T patient.

LOVE,  
PH LADY

DEAR PR

I have to finish lunch first, but I appreciate the offer. (Seriously, I may take her up on it at a later, less summer-vacation date.) Unlike many people I encounter while doing vaguely progressive work in a place where more people practice Tantra than go to church on Sunday, I don't dismiss out of hand the idea that so-called "Big Pharma" can be a source of good. How can I, after all the intensive interventions that got me and my kids through a dicey beginning, not to mention my long love affair with antidepressants and a devoted fan-girl relationship with Viagra and the gang?

While dispatches from Big Ph are best taken with both a grain of salt and a

grain of sugar, I'll still take them. And I do like the idea of checklists the patient can take along to the doctor. What with the research being new-ish and the subject being vaguely sex-related, some doctors are just going to nod and smile and pretend they never heard a request for a testosterone test, and one may be able to catch their attention by waving a few brightly-colored pages in their face. There are some such available on the pharma-sponsored site Ms Lady linked, and I can't see any reason not to use them, although they do contain a few quibble-worthy statements like "A simple blood test... will determine if your testosterone levels are below normal." From everything I've read elsewhere, this ought to be precisely untrue: testosterone may be bound by sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG), so either high or low SHBG, both common, will produce inaccurate test results. You will want to wave around some pages about

how to get an accurate testosterone test done along with the others.

**SPEAKING OF HORMONES.** The other noteworthy note I got last week came from a transwoman (I assume) incensed at my—what else?—insensitive use of language. The subject was a recent "Why does my guy look tranny pom?" question, and in case the one letter I got really was standing in for a thousand equally pissed-off people too lazy to write letters, I thought I'd clear up a misunderstanding or two while I'm waiting for lunch.

My correspondent took offense at the term "transsexual pom," pointing out that some transsexuals are adopting the term "Harry Benjamin's Syndrome" (Benjamin created the well-known Standards of Care for patients seeking sex reassignment surgery) to avoid just such a sexualization of their identity. Indeed, but then I have to point out that A) people choosing this label are a very specific subset of a large and

often fractious community, and B) you may repeat "No transsexual would be comfortable being photographed displaying her private parts. And they certainly never identify as 'chicks with dicks.' What you are describing is something TOTALLY unrelated to transsexuals" as often and as upper-casely as you like and it's still not going to be any truer than, say, "No Jewish, female American person would ever go out wearing her husband's underwear because she couldn't find any of her own."

The problem with umbrella terms like "transsexual" is that we may have to share them with people we think smell bad. My correspondent may prefer to think that all transwomen don little skirts from Talbots and disappear into the genpop but it just ain't so. Don't the non-ops who pay for their estrogen by running ads in the back of papers like this one deserve inclusion? Where is the love?

DEAR  
ANDREA

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<input type="checkbox"/> Symbols	\$3

### FORM OF PAYMENT

<input type="checkbox"/> Cash	<input type="checkbox"/> Check	<input type="checkbox"/> VISA	<input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard
Card# _____	Name _____	Exp. / _____	Postal Code _____
Address _____	Ph. _____	TOTAL	
Symbol _____	Symbol _____	Lines	_____
Symbol _____	Symbol _____	Extras	_____
Symbol _____	Symbol _____	Surcharge	_____
Symbol _____	Symbol _____	GST 5%	_____
Symbol _____	Symbol _____	TOTAL	_____

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